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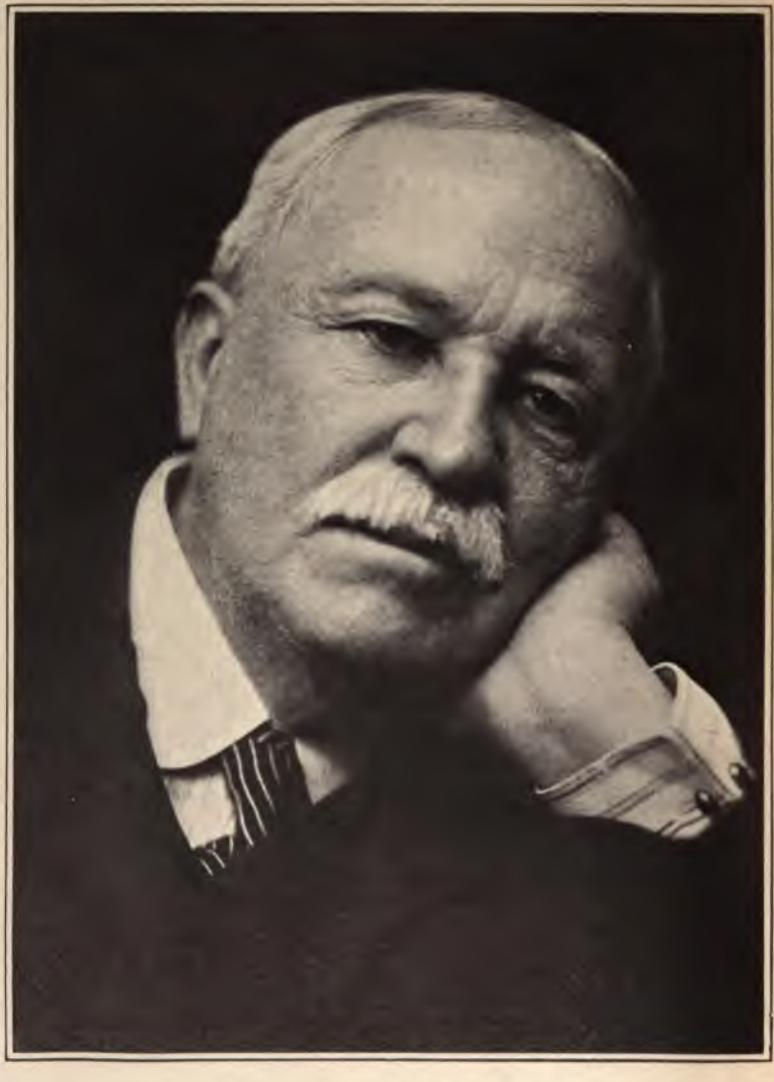

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

THE VACATION OF THE KELWYNS

An Idyl of the Middle Eighteen-Seventies

By

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

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THE VACATION OF THE KELWYNS

THE VACATION OF THE KELWYNS

AN IDYL
OF THE MIDDLE EIGHTEEN-SEVENTIES

I

KELWYN'S salary as a lecturer in the post-graduate courses would not have been enough for his family to live upon; but his wife had some money of her own, and this with his salary enabled them to maintain themselves upon the scale of refined frugality which was the rule in the university town, and to indulge, now and then, a guarded hospitality. Like the other university people, they spent their whole income on their living, except the sum which Kelwyn paid for his life insurance. They kept two maids, and had, in common with four other university families, the use of one undivided one-fifth of a man, who took care of their furnace and shovelled the snow off their paths in winter, and cut their grass in the spring and fall; in the summer when they were away they let the grass tangle at will.

Mrs. Kelwyn passed this season largely in a terror of moths, especially the hairy sort called buffalo-bugs, which began to introduce themselves by that name at the date of our story. In dreams and in many a fearful revery she saw them gorging themselves upon her

carpets and furniture and blankets and all her other woollens, and treating the camphor the things were put up in as an agreeable condiment. She was, in fact, a New England housekeeper of the most exacting sort, with a conscience that gave those she loved very little peace, in its manifold scruples, anxieties, and premonitions. She was so far in the divine confidence as to be able to prophesy events with much precision, especially disastrous events, and especially disastrous events which her husband thought would not come to pass. In this, as in other things, she was entirely devoted to him and to their children; to hear her talk you would suppose there was a multitude of them.

She pampered Kelwyn and flattered him, and she did what she could to make him believe that because he had, after many years as a post-graduate student, become a post-graduate lecturer, he was something different from other men, and merited attention from destiny. He was really a very well-read and careful scholar in his department of Historical Sociology, with no thought of applying his science to his own life or conduct. In person, he was not tall, but he was very straight; he carried himself with a sort of unintentional pomp, and walked with short, stiff steps. He was rather dim behind the spectacles he wore; but he was very pleasant when he spoke, and his mind was not as dry as his voice; when pushed to the wall he was capable of a joke; in fact, he had a good deal of ancestral Yankee humor which he commonly repressed, but which came out in the stress put upon him by his wife's requisitions in hypothetical cases of principle and practice. He suffered at times from indigestion; but he was indefatigably industrious, and had thought the blond hair thin on his head in places; he wore a reddish mustache. He was either not quite so tall as his wife, or he looked

not quite so tall, because of her skirts, and her aquiline profile; she seemed always to have him in charge when they were together, which made him appear smaller still; they were both of about the same blondness, though hers tended rather more to dust color.

Kelwyn's father had been first a farm boy, and then a country merchant, who reserved him for an intellectual career; and his career since he first entered school had been as purely intellectual as if he had been detached from the soil by generations of culture and affluence. His associations had always been with nice people, in college and afterward; he liked that sort, and they liked him, for Kelwyn was a pleasant fellow, and was noticeably a gentleman, if not a gentleman by birth. In America society does not insist that one shall be a gentleman by birth; that is generally impossible; but it insists that he shall be intelligent and refined, and have the right sort of social instincts; and then it yields him an acceptance which ignores any embarrassing facts in his origin, and asks nothing but that he shall ignore them too. Kelwyn did this so completely that he never thought of them. His father and mother were now dead, and he had been an only child, so that he had not even a duty to the past. All his duties were to the present, and they were so agreeable that he could easily discharge them with conscience and credit. In a day when people were just beginning to look into sociology, and most people were still regarding it as the driest branch on the tree of knowledge, he made it one of the most important of the post-graduate courses at the university. The students liked him, and they took such a gratifying interest in their work under him that some of them had a habit, which he encouraged, of coming to talk with him about it at his house out of hours. He made them very welcome in his li-

brary, and even offered to offer them cigars, which they refused out of regard to Kelwyn's not smoking himself; and when one of them would begin, "Do you think, Mr. Kelwyn," and then go on to ask him some question on one of his favorite points in the morning's lecture, Kelwyn would feel that his office was a very high one, and could not be magnified too much.

His wife often wished that the faculty and the board of overseers could know the influence he had with the students; but, in fact, Kelwyn's usefulness was well known to them, and his promotion to an under-professorship in the body of the university was only a question of time. He was respected outside of the university as well as in it. In politics he was a reformer, and he was faithful in a good deal of committee work, when his college work alone was killing him, as Mrs. Kelwyn said more than once. She herself did not shirk a share in the local charities, and she would have done more in that way, if she had not felt that Mr. Kelwyn and the children had the first claim upon her.

II

Robust health would not have been in keeping with Kelwyn's vocation or circumstances; but his digestion was not so delicate as Mrs. Kelwyn believed when she took him every summer away from the well-netted comfort of his study (they had wire nettings at every door and window of the house, and even over the tops of the chimneys, for it had been found that mosquitoes sometimes got in down the flues) and set him unnetted amid the insects of the open country. She had thought a great deal about the best places to go to, and she had gone to a great many places, each better in prospect and worse in retrospect than the other, but sufficing, for the time, to hold Kelwyn from his books, and give him what she called a rest; he felt it as an anguish of longing to get back to his work. They had not as yet imagined having a country house of their own, such as nearly everybody of their condition has now; even the summer shell was little known in the early eighteen-seventies, and the cheap and simple cottages of the better sort common in our day were undreamed of. Like other nice families of their circumstance and acquaintance, thirty or thirty-five years ago, the Kelwyns engaged board during the winter at some farm-house in the Massachusetts or New Hampshire hill country, going up to look at the place on a mild day of the January thaw, and settling themselves in it early in June. Their understanding would be for good beds and plain country fare, with plenty of milk and eggs and berries; and they would

get mattresses of excelsior faced on one side with refuse wool; and premature beef and tardy lamb, with last year's potatoes, and no leaf of the contemporary vegetation till far into July. Kelwyn himself had a respite from all this during commencement week, when he went home and slept in his own dwelling, taking his meals at the nearest boarding-house, where they had the spring fruits and vegetables, tender steak, and cream such as never appeared upon the unstinted milk of the farm.

Mrs. Kelwyn's ideal was a place where there were no other boarders, and where they could have their meals at a table of their own, apart from the farmer's family; but even when she could realize this it was not in the perfection that her nerves demanded. If she made Kelwyn take all the rooms in the house, still there was some nook where the farmer's wife contrived to stow a boarder who ate with the farm family, or a visiting friend who woke the Kelwyns at dawn with the plaint of the parlor organ; the rest of the day they had the sole use of the parlor, and could keep the organ pacified. The farmer's wife imagined that she had fulfilled the agreement for a private table when she had put everything on it at once, and shut the Kelwyns in to take care of themselves. After the first relay of griddle-cakes she expected them to come out to the kitchen for the next; and to get hot water from the kettle and cold water from the pump, as they needed either. Kelwyn did not mind this so much as his wife, who minded it chiefly for his sake as wholly out of keeping with the dignity of a university lecturer; for it fell to him mostly to do these things.

In the last place she had so often undergone the hardship of making Kelwyn hurry out untimely in the morning to fill the wash-pitcher, forgotten overnight by the hostess, that she was quite disheartened,

and came home in the fall feeling that she must give up the notion of farm board thereafter, and try to find some small hotel not too public and not too expensive for them. The winter passed and the spring was well advanced, and still they had not found just such a hotel as they wanted, though they had asked among all the nice people they knew, and Kelwyn had looked several of the places up. He would have been willing to try another farm-house, and still more willing to pass the summer in town, under his own well-shaded roof; but Mrs. Kelwyn was not willing to do either, and he was by no means resting from his search, but merely rejoicing in a little respite, when one day he received a very odd visit.

This visit was paid him by a quaintly dressed old man, who said he was an Elder of the people called Shakers, and that he had come to Kelwyn because of some account he had read of the kind of work he was doing in the university, and had thought he would be pleased, in his quality of lecturer on Historical Sociology, to know something of the social experiment of the Shakers. It presently appeared that he had counted so much upon Kelwyn's interest in it as to believe that he might make it the theme of a lecture, and he had come with a little printed tract on the Shaker life and doctrine which he had written himself, and which he now gave Kelwyn with the hope, very politely expressed, that it might be useful to him in the preparation of his lectures. The whole affair was to Kelwyn's mind so full of a sweet innocence that he felt it invited the most delicate handling on his part, and he used all the niceness he was master of in thanking the old man for his pamphlet, without giving him the expectation that he would really treat of Shakerism before the students of his post-graduate course. Inwardly he was filled with

amusement at the notion of his august science stooping to inquire into such a lowly experiment as that of those rustic communists; but outwardly he treated it with grave deference, and said that he should have the greatest pleasure in reading the pamphlet of the Elder. He was curious enough to ask some questions about the Family to which his visitor belonged, and then about the general conditions of Shakerism. It amused him again when his visitor answered, from a steadfast faith in its doctrine, that his sect was everywhere in decay, and that his own Family was now a community of aging men and women, and must soon die out unless it was recruited from the world-outside. He seemed to feel that he had a mission to the gentler phases of this world, and he did not conceal that he had come with some hope that if the character of Shakerism could be truly set forth to such cultivated youth as must attend Kelwyn's lectures, considerable accessions from their number might follow. The worst thing in the present condition of Shakerism, he said, was that the community was obliged to violate the very law of its social being, for the brethren were too feeble to work in the fields themselves, and were forced to employ hireling labor. Kelwyn learned from his willing avowals that they had some thousands of acres which they could only let grow up in forests for the crops of timber they would finally yield, and that it was not easy always to find tenants for the farms they had to let. He spoke of one farm which would be given, with one of the Family dwellings, to a suitable tenant at a rent so ridiculously low that Kelwyn said, with a laugh, if the Shakers would furnish the house, though twenty-five rooms were rather more than his family needed, he did not know but he might take the farm himself for the summer. He went into a little history of their experience of farm board

and the defeat of their aspirations for a house that they could control without putting the care of housekeeping upon his wife; and he ended by confessing that at the present moment they were without any prospects whatever for the summer.

III

The Elder did not seem to enter very eagerly into the matter, as if he were not expected to do so; he said it would not be easy to find just what they wanted, and when he took his leave he left Kelwyn with the feeling that he regarded his aspiration with a certain cautious disapproval. Kelwyn made a joke of this to his wife, in telling her of his visitor, and he was the more surprised, two days later, to get a letter from him saying that he had talked over with the Family Kelwyn's notion of furnishing the house, and they had decided to act upon it if he was still disposed to hire the place for a year. In this case, the Elder wrote, they knew of a man and his wife who would be willing to come into the house and board them at a much lower rate than usual, if he could have the produce of the farm, and the house for the rest of the year after they left it. The rent would be the same as for the house unfurnished.

Kelwyn's wife first provisionally disciplined him for giving his correspondent a groundless hope that he would do anything so wild; but when he convinced her that he was innocent she began to find it not such a bad scheme, and she ended by driving him off that very day to look at the place, which was just over the border in southern New Hampshire. There was no time to be lost, for the Shakers might offer it to somebody else if he did not act promptly. She made him telegraph them that he was coming, and the boy who drove him over to the Shaker village from the station carried his

despatch to them. He came home in a rapture with the place. The house, which had been left vacant by the shrinkage of the community, was almost as vast as a college dormitory, but it was curiously homelike at the same time, with a great kitchen, and a running spring of delicious water piped into it; a dining-room which had been the Family refectory and looked eastward through the leaves of embowering elms across beautiful country to Mount Ponkwasset in the distance; the choice of a multitude of airy bedrooms; and the hall where the Shaker Family used to dance for a parlor or sitting-room. The only trouble was that they might be lost in the huge mansion; but, if they settled themselves on one floor, they could perhaps find one another at meal-times. Kelwyn drew a plan, and showed how they could take the second story, and leave the first to the farmer's family. The whole house was deliciously cool, and there were fireplaces where they could have a blaze in chilly weather, and cheer themselves with the flame at night. The high open plateau where the house stood, not far from the Shaker village which had dried away from it, was swept by pure breezes that blew in at every window, and made mosquitoes impossible and nettings superfluous.

"Flies," Mrs. Kelwyn suggested.

"I don't believe there would be any flies," Kelwyn returned; and then she accused him of being infatuated.

She felt the need of greater strictness with him because she knew herself hopelessly taken with his report, which she did not believe exaggerated. "And the farmer, did you see him or his wife? Because that's the most important matter."

"Yes, I understood that. But they were not living in the neighborhood, and I couldn't get at them. The

man has been in the Shakers' employ, off and on, and they said his habits were good; they described the woman as a quiet, inoffensive person. They are people who have always had rather a hard time, and have never been able to get a place of their own. They wanted to take this place, but they didn't feel sure they could meet the rent. I suppose it would be a godsend if we took it for them. But we're not to consider that. The question is whether *we* want it; and I knew we couldn't decide till we had seen the people. The Shakers thought they could send the man down in a day or two, and then we could satisfy ourselves."

"And you haven't committed yourself?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, you have managed very prudently, Elmer," said Mrs. Kelwyn. She added with an impulse of the sudden fear that springs from security itself, "I hope you haven't lost the chance."

Kelwyn resented the imputation of overcaution, but he only answered, rather loftily, "I don't think there's any danger."

They began to talk of it as an accomplished fact, and it grew upon them in this vantage. They saw what a very perfect thing it would be if it were the thing at all. They would have complete control of the situation. The house would be their house, and the farmer would be their tenant at will. If they did not like him or his wife, if they did not find them capable or faithful, they could turn them out-of-doors any day; and they could not be turned out themselves, or molested, so long as they paid the Shakers the absurd trifle they asked for rent. It seemed impossible that they could fail of their pleasure in such circumstances, but Mrs. Kelwyn, merely in the interest of abstract knowledge, carried her scrutiny so far as to ask, "And could

you turn him out of the farm, too, if they didn't do well in the house?"

Kelwyn had really not considered this point, but he said, "I don't know that I should think it quite right to do that after the man had got his crops in."

"No," said Mrs. Kelwyn, "of course not," and in a generous revulsion of feeling she added, "It will be a great opportunity for the poor things."

"Yes, I have thought of that," said Kelwyn. "They will have their rent free so long as they behave themselves, and if we find the arrangement works there is no reason why we should not continue it from year to year indefinitely. Of course," he added, "we mustn't pretend that we are making the arrangement on their account. We are primarily doing it for ourselves."

"Yes, charity begins at home," said Mrs. Kelwyn, thoughtfully, but there was a vague dissatisfaction in her voice.

Kelwyn smiled. "Were you thinking it didn't?" he asked.

"Why, yes," she answered, as if surprised into the admission. "Were you, too?"

"It struck me as rather a hollow-hearted saying; I don't know why. I never questioned it before. But I fancy it's something else that begins at home, and that charity begins away from home."

"I don't believe it's very well to look at those things in that spirit exactly," said Mrs. Kelwyn. "We can make anything appear ugly by putting it in a strange light. Besides, I don't think that this is a matter of charity, quite."

"No, it's most distinctly a matter of business. Ethically considered, it is merely a thing that is right in itself, and the good that may flow from it is none the less good for being incidental. That is the way that most

of the good in the world has come about. The history of civilization is that of certain people who wished to better their own condition, and made others wish to do the same by the spectacle of their success." Kelwyn made a mental note of his notion for use in a lecture. It seemed to him novel, but he must think a little more whether it was tenable. Perhaps he could throw it out in the form of a suggestion.

His wife could not dwell in the region of speculation even with him; it is perhaps the weakness of their sex that obliges women to secure themselves in the practical. She said, "Well, then, all we can do is to wait until the man comes. Then, if we think they can manage for us, we can close the bargain at once. But don't let the place slip through your fingers, Elmer. The Shakers may have offered it to some one else, and you had better write to them, and tell them we think very well of it, and will decide as soon as we see the man."

They talked a great deal of the affair for the next day or two, and they somehow transmuted the financial disability of their prospective tenants into something physical; they formed the habit of speaking of them as "those poor little people," and with perhaps undue sense of their own advantage they figured them as of anxious and humble presence, fearful of losing the great chance of their lives. It was impossible, in this view of them, for the Kelwyns to intend them anything but justice. Without being sentimentalists, they both saw that they must not abuse those people's helplessness in any way. They decided that they would offer to pay them the full amount of board which they usually paid for board in the summer, after taking out, of course, a certain sum for the rent during the time they were with them; the rest of the year's rent they would for-

give them. This seemed to the Kelwyns very handsome on their part, and the fact that they were to have the range of the whole house, instead of two rooms, as they had hitherto had at farm-houses, did not appear to them too much in the circumstances.

IV

They had no right to complain, but it certainly did not comport with their prepossessions that the farmer, when he came, should arrive in the proportions of a raw-boned giant, with an effect of hard-woodedness, as if he were hewn out of hickory, with the shag-bark left on in places; his ready-made clothes looked as hard as he. He had on his best behavior as well as his best clothes, but the corners of his straight wide mouth dropped sourly at moments, and Kelwyn fancied both contempt and suspicion in his bony face, which was tagged with a harsh black beard. Those unpleasant corners of his mouth were accented by tobacco stain, for he had a form of the tobacco habit uncommon in New England; his jaw worked unceasingly with a slow, bovine grind; but when the moment came, after a first glance at Kelwyn's neat fireplace, he rose and spat out of the window; after Mrs. Kelwyn joined them in her husband's study, he made errands to the front door for the purpose of spitting.

Kelwyn expected that she would give him a sign of her instant rejection of the whole scheme at sight of the man, who had inspired him with a deep disgust; but to his surprise she did nothing of the kind; she even placated the man, by a special civility, as if she divined in him an instinctive resentment of her husband's feeling. She made him sit down in a better place than Kelwyn had let him take, and she inspired him to volunteer an explanation of his coming alone, in the statement he had already made to Kelwyn, that

he guessed the Woman would have come with him, but the Boy had got a pretty hard cold on him, and she was staying at home to fix him up.

Kelwyn said, to put a stop to the flow of sympathy which followed from his wife, that he had been trying to ask Mr. Kite something about the cooking, but he thought he had better leave her to make the inquiries.

"Oh yes," she said, brightly. "You can give us light bread, I suppose?"

The man smiled scornfully, and looked round as if taking an invisible spectator into the joke, and said, "I guess the Woman can make it for you; I never touch it myself. We have hot biscuit."

"*We* should like hot bread too, now and then," Mrs. Kelwyn said.

"You can have it every meal, same's we do," the man said.

"We shouldn't wish to give Mrs. Kite so much trouble," Mrs. Kelwyn remarked, without apparent surprise at the luxury proposed. "I suppose she is used to broiling steak, and—"

"Always *fry* our'n," the man said, "but I guess she can broil it for you."

"I merely thought I would speak of it. We don't care much for pies; but we should like a simple pudding now and then; though, really, with berries of all kinds, and the different fruits as they come, we shall scarcely need any other desserts. We should expect plenty of good sweet milk, and we don't like to stint ourselves with the cream. I am sure Mrs. Kite will know how to cook vegetables nicely."

"Well," the farmer said, turning away from the Kelwyns to his invisible familiar for sympathy in his scorn, "what my wife don't know about cookin', I guess ain't wo'th knowin'."

"Because," Mrs. Kelwyn continued, "we shall almost *live* upon vegetables."

"I mean to put in a garden of 'em—pease, beans, and squash, and sweet-corn, and all the rest of 'em. You sha'n't want for vegetables. You've tasted the Shaker cookin'?"

"My husband dined with them the day he was up there."

"Then he knows what Shaker cookin' is. So do we. And I guess my wife ain't goin' to fall *much* below it, if any."

He looked round once more to his familiar in boastful contempt, and even laughed. Kelwyn's mouth watered at the recollection of the Shaker table, so simple, so wholesome, and yet so varied and appetizing, at a season when in the absence of fresh garden supplies art had to assist nature so much.

"Oh, I am sure we shall be very well off," said Mrs. Kelwyn. "We shall bring our own tea—English breakfast tea."

"Never heard of it," Kite interrupted. "We always have Japan tea. But you can bring whatever you want to. Guess we sha'n't steal it." This seemed to be a joke, and he laughed at it.

"Oh no," said Mrs. Kelwyn, in deprecation of the possibility that she might have given the ground for such a pleasantry. "Well, I think I have spoken of everything, and now I will leave you two to arrange terms."

"No, no! Don't go!" her husband entreated. "We'd better all talk it over together so that I can be sure that I am right."

"That's the way *I* do with *my* wife," Kite said, with a laugh of approval.

The Kelwyns, with each other's help, unfolded to

him what they had proposed doing. As they did so, it seemed to them both a very handsome proposal, and they were aware of having considered themselves much less in it than they had feared. As it appeared now, they had thought so much more of their tenants than they had imagined that if it had not been too late they might have wished they had thought less. Afterward they felt that they had not kept many of the advantages they might very well have kept, though again they decided that this was an effect from their failure to stipulate them, and that they remained in their hands nevertheless.

Kite sat listening with silent intensity. He winked his hard eyes from time to time, but he gave no other sign of being dazzled by their proposal.

"You understand?" Kelwyn asked, to break the silence which the farmer let ensue when he ended.

"I guess so," Kite answered, dryly. "I'll have to talk to the woman about it. You must set it down, so I can show it to her the way you said."

"Certainly," Kelwyn said, and he hastily jotted down the points and handed the paper to Kite; it did not enter into Kite's scheme of civility to rise and take it. He sat holding the paper in his hand and staring at it.

"I believe that's right?" Kelwyn suggested.

"I guess so," said Kite.

"I don't believe," Mrs. Kelwyn interposed, "that Mr. Kite can make it out in your handwriting, my dear. You do write such a hand!"

"Well, I guess I will have to get you to read it," Kite said, reaching the paper to Kelwyn, without rising, but letting him rise to get it.

Kelwyn read it carefully over, dwelling on each point. Kite kept a wooden immobility; but when Kel-

wyn had finished he reared his length from the lounge where it had been half folded, and put his hat on. "Well, I'll show this to the woman when I get back, and we'll let you know how we feel about it. Well, good-morning." He got himself out of the house with no further ceremony, and the Kelwyns remained staring at each other in a spell which they found it difficult to break.

"Don't you suppose he could read it?" she asked, in a kind of a gasp.

"I have my doubts," said Kelwyn.

"He didn't seem to like the terms, did you think?"

"I don't know. I feel as if *we* had been proposing to become *his* tenants, and had been acting rather greedily in the matter."

"Yes, that was certainly the effect. Do you believe we offended him in some way? I don't think *I* did, for I was most guarded in everything I said; and unless you went against the grain with him before I came down—"

"I was butter in a lordly dish to him, before you came down, my dear!"

"I don't know. You were letting him sit in a very uncomfortable chair, and I had to think to put him on your lounge. And now, we're not sure that he will accept the terms."

"Not till he has talked it over with the 'woman.' I almost wish that the woman would refuse us."

"It gives us a chance to draw back, too. He was certainly very disagreeable, though I don't believe he meant it. He may have been merely uncouth. And, after all, it doesn't matter about *him*. We shall never see him or have anything to do with him, indoors. He will have to hitch up the horse for us, and bring it to

the door, and that will be the end of it. I wish we knew something about *her*, though."

"He seemed to think his own knowing was enough," Kelwyn mused. "She is evidently perfection—in his eyes."

"Yes, his pride in her was touching," said Mrs. Kelwyn. "That was the great thing about him. As soon as that came out, it atoned for everything. You can see that she twists him round her finger."

"I don't know whether that's a merit or not."

"It's a great merit in such a man. She is probably his superior in every way. You can see how he looks up to her."

"Yes," Kelwyn admitted, rather absently. "Did you have a feeling that he didn't exactly look up to us?"

"He despised us," said Mrs. Kelwyn, very promptly. "But that doesn't mean that he won't use us well. I have often noticed that in country people, even when they are much smoother than he was, and I have noticed it in working-people of all kinds. They do despise us, and I don't believe they respect anybody but working-people, really, though they're so glad to get out of working when they can. They think we're a kind of children, or fools, because we don't know how to do things with our hands, and all the culture in us won't change them. I could see that man's eye taking in your books and manuscripts, and scorning them."

"I don't know but you're right, Carry, and it is very curious. It's a thing that hasn't been taken into account in our studies of the conditions. We always suppose that the superiors despise the inferiors, but perhaps it is really the inferiors that despise the superiors, and it's that which embitters the classes against one another."

"Well," said Mrs. Kelwyn, "what I hope is that the wife may have education enough to tolerate us, if we're to be at their mercy."

"I hope she can read writing, anyway," Kelwyn said. "And it's droll, but you've hit it in what you say; it's been growing on me, too, that they will have us at their mercy. I had fancied that we were to have them at ours."

The scheme looked more and more doubtful to the Kelwyns. There were times when they woke together in the night, and confessed the same horror of it, and vowed each other to break it off. Yet when daylight came it always looked very simple, and it had so many alluring aspects that they smiled at their nightly terrors. It was true, after all, that they could command the situation, and whether they cared to turn the Kites out of the farm or not, they could certainly turn them out of the house if they proved unfit or unfaithful. They would have, for the first time, a whole house to themselves, for they should allow the Kites only servants' quarters in it, and they would have the whole vast range and space for very little more money than they had ordinarily paid for farm board. They could undoubtedly control the table, and if the things were not good they could demand better. But a theory of Mrs. Kite grew upon Mrs. Kelwyn the more she thought of Kite's faith in his wife, which comforted her in her misgivings. This was the theory of her comparative superiority, which Mrs. Kelwyn based upon the probability that she could not possibly be so ignorant and uncouth as her husband. It was, no doubt, her ambition to better their lot which was urging him to take the farm, and she would do everything she could to please. In this view of her, Mrs. Kelwyn resolved to meet her half-way; to be patient of any little failures at first, and to teach

the countrywoman town ways by sympathy rather than by criticism. That was a duty she owed her, and Mrs. Kelwyn meant to shirk none of her duties, while eventually claiming all her rights. She said this to herself in her reveries, and she said it to her husband in their conferences during the days that followed one another after Kite's visit. So many days followed before he made any further sign that Mrs. Kelwyn had time to work completely round from her reluctance to close the engagement with him, or his wife, rather, and to have wrought herself into an eagerness amounting to anxiety and bordering upon despair lest the Kites should not wish to close it. With difficulty she kept herself from making Kelwyn write and offer them better terms; she prevailed with herself so far, indeed, as to keep from making him write and ask for their decision. When it came unurged, however, she felt that she had made such a narrow escape that she must not risk further misgivings even. She argued the best from the quite mannerly and shapely letter (for a poor country person) which Mrs. Kite wrote in accepting the terms they offered. She did not express any opinion or feeling in regard to them, but she probably knew that they were very good; and Mrs. Kelwyn began to be proud of them again.

V

It was the afternoon of such a spring day as comes nowhere but in New England that the Kelwyns arrived at their summer home. There was a little edge of cold in it, at four o'clock, which the bright high sun did not soften, and which gave a pleasant thrill to the nerves. The blue sky bent over the earth a perfect dome without the faintest cloud. The trees, full foliaged, whistled in the gale that swept the land, and billowed the long grass, and tossed the blades of the low corn. All was sweet and clean, as if the spirit of New England housekeeping had entered into Nature, and she had set her house in order for company.

Mrs. Kelwyn kept feeling like a guest during the drive over from the station, and she had an obscure resentment of the feeling as a foreshadowed effect from an attempt on Mrs. Kite's part to play the hostess. She must be the mistress from the first, and, though Mrs. Kite was not to be quite her servant, she must be made to realize distinctly that the house was Mrs. Kelwyn's, and that she was in it by Mrs. Kelwyn's favor; this realization could not begin too soon.

But it had apparently begun already, and when the caravan of the Kelwyns drew up under the elms at the gable of the old Shaker Family house, nothing could have been more to Mrs. Kelwyn's mind than the whole keeping of the place, unless it was the behavior of Mrs. Kite. She did not come officiously forward in welcome, as Mrs. Kelwyn had feared she might; she stood wait-

ing in the doorway for the Kelwyns to alight and introduce themselves; but Mrs. Kelwyn decided that this was from respect and not pride, for the woman seemed a humble creature enough when she spoke to her: not embarrassed, but not forth-putting.

She had the effect of having on the best dress she had compatible with household duties, and she looked neat and agreeable in it. She was rather graceful, and she was of a sort of blameless middlingness in looks. A boy, somewhat younger than the elder Kelwyn boy, stood beside her and stared at the two young Kelwyns with strange eyes of impersonal guile.

It was a relief for the moment, and then for another moment a surprise, not to see Kite himself about; but Mrs. Kelwyn had scarcely drawn an indignant breath when the man came hulking round the corner of the house, where he stopped to swear over his shoulder at the team he must have left somewhere, and then advanced to the wagon piled high with the Kelwyns' trunks, and called out to them rather than to the Kelwyns, "Well, *how* are you!"

The house was everything Kelwyn had painted it. Mrs. Kelwyn explored it with him to give him the pleasure of her approval before she settled down to the minute examination of their quarters; and together, with their children, they ranged up and down stairs and through the long passages, feeling like a bath the delight of its cool cleanliness. Mrs. Kite, who met them on their return from their wanderings, said the Shaker ladies had been up the day before, putting on the last touches before they should come. It was pleasant to know that they had been expected and prepared for, but Mrs. Kelwyn fancied that, though the housekeeping had been instituted by the Shaker ladies, it must have been the Shaker gentlemen who had looked

after the house furnishing. She had expected that there might be a Shaker stiffness in the appointments, but that there would also be a Shaker quaintness; and she had imagined her rooms dressed in the Shaker gear, which the house must once have worn, and which would have been restored from the garrets and basements of the other community dwellings. But the Shakers had not imagined anything of that kind. Whichever of them it had been left to had laid one kind of ingrain carpet in all the rooms, and furnished the chambers in a uniformity of painted pine sets. There was a parlor set of black walnut, and there were painted shades at the windows. All was new, and smelled fresh and wholesome, but the things had no more character than they had in the furniture warerooms where they were bought. Apparently the greatest good-will had been used, and Mrs. Kelwyn could well believe that the Shakers supposed they had dealt much more acceptably by them than if they had given them the rag carpets and the hooked rugs, the high-post bedsteads and splint chairs which she would have so much rather had.

The Kelwyns were a long time getting settled into temporary form; the robins were shouting their good-nights around them, and a thrush was shrilling from the woods that covered the hill slope behind the house, when the tinkle of a far-off bell called them to supper. Then they found themselves suddenly hungry, and they sat down in the old Shaker refectory with minds framed to eager appreciation of what good things might be set before them. Mrs. Kite gave a glance at the table before she left it to them; and said that she would be right there in the kitchen if they wanted anything. She really went down-stairs beyond the kitchen to the ground floor, where she had four or five rooms with her family.

The Kelwyns had a four-o'clock dinner at home, and now it was a quarter past seven as they sat down with their orderly little boys at the supper which Mrs. Kite had imagined for them. There were two kinds of cake on the table: three slices of pound-cake, translucent but solid, at one end of the table, and thicker slices of marble-cake, with veins of *verde antique* varying its surface of Siena yellow, at the other. A dish of stewed fruit stood in the centre, which proved to be dried apples; at Mrs. Kelwyn's right elbow was the teapot; on one hand of Kelwyn was a plate of butter, and on the other a plate of bread cut from a loaf of which the half remained beside the pieces. In the bewilderment of realizing the facts he lifted successively the butter and the bread to his nose, which involuntarily curled from them, in the silence broken by Mrs. Kelwyn's lifting the teapot lid an instant, and then clapping it to with a quick "Ugh!"

"Isn't it our tea?" he asked, quietly.

"It's *all* of it, I should think," said his wife. "She doesn't know how to make English breakfast tea, evidently. She's steeped it like green tea, and it's as strong as lye. What's the matter with the butter?"

"I don't know what to liken its strength to."

"And the bread?"

"It seems like what they used to call salt-rising bread. I haven't smelt any since I was a boy."

He stretched the plate toward her, and when she brought it within range of her nose she averted her face with a wild "Phew!" and an imploring cry of "Elmer!" while she made play with her hands as if fighting away mosquitoes.

"I remember that when it was hot you could eat it if you hurried; but when it was cold!"

He said no more, and his wife could not speak. The

elder of the two well-behaved little boys made a preliminary noise in his throat, and then, not being quelled, ventured to ask, "Mamma, may I say something?"

"What is it, dear?" his mother returned, tenderly, as from the sense of a common sorrow.

"Oh, nothing," the boy said, politely. "But is this all, or do they begin with the dessert in the country?"

Kelwyn laughed harshly, and his wife looked at him with reproach. She had been about to bid the child eat what was set before him and not make remarks, but in despair of setting him the example she felt that she must forbear the precept. "I'm afraid it isn't the dessert, dear," she answered, gently. "I'm afraid it's —all."

"All?" the boy echoed, in a husky tone, and at the melancholy sound his younger brother, who took his cue from him in everything, silently put up his lip.

"Elmer!" their mother demanded. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to get something to eat." Kelwyn pushed back his chair and launched himself forward as in act to start for the kitchen door.

His wife intercepted him with the appeal: "No! Wait, Elmer! We must begin as we can carry out."

This saying has always an implication of reserved wisdom, and besides Kelwyn was willing to be intercepted; he sank back into his chair.

"*I* must talk with her, and I must think what to say, what to do. We mustn't be harsh, but we must be firm. I'm afraid she's done her best on mistaken lines. She's tried to realize our ideals, but if she had been left to her own it might have been different. We are bound to suppose so."

"And in the mean time we are starving," Kelwyn argued.

"I know all that, my dear," his wife retorted. "But we must begin as we can carry out; and in the first place there must be no going to them: they must come to us. Will you bring the bell off the bureau in mamma's room?" she bade the eldest boy, and the youngest ran with him; they returned in better spirits, and climbed back to their places in eager expectation.

"May I ring it?" the eldest brother asked.

"*I* want to ring it," the youngest entreated.

"No, darlings, mamma must ring," said the mother, with a tenderness meant for them and a stateliness meant for Mrs. Kite. She rang almost majestically at first; then indignantly; then angrily.

Mrs. Kite put her head in from the kitchen. "Oh! I thought I heard a bell ringin' somewhere," she concluded, in apology for her intrusion.

"Yes," said Mrs. Kelwyn, with a sternness from which she gave herself time to relax before she added: "Could you give us some eggs, Mrs. Kite? Soft boiled?"

"Oh, *fried,* mamma!" the eldest boy, who was Francis, entreated.

"*I* want fried," his younger brother whispered, with the lack of originality innate in younger brothers.

"'Sh!" said their mother. "Francy, I'm astonished. Carl! Won't you come in, Mrs. Kite?"

Mrs. Kite came in and sat down.

"And could you," Mrs. Kelwyn pursued, in the petition which she tried to keep from making itself a command, "give us some of your hot biscuit?"

The children could not keep from noiselessly clapping their hands; arrested in the act by their mother's frown, they held their hands joined and appeared to be saying a grace.

"Why, yes," Mrs. Kite assented. "But I guess they ain't very hot any more. The fire's gone down—"

"I suppose you could make it up for the eggs," Mrs. Kelwyn suggested.

"Oh, I guess Alvin can make it up again," Mrs. Kite assented.

Kelwyn was taking involuntary notes of her, and he could not have said whether she was assenting willingly or unwillingly. She might have been meek or she might have been sly; she could have been pretty or plain, as you thought; her pale sandy hair might have been golden; her gray eyes blue. A neutrality which seemed the potentiality of better or worse things pervaded her.

"Well, we should like some soft-boiled eggs — or fried," Mrs. Kelwyn said, in concession to her children, "if it's just as easy. We have a late dinner at home, and we're rather hungry."

"Why," said Mrs. Kite, "if you'd 'a' sent word I'd 'a' had a warm supper for you—milk toast and some kind of meat."

"Oh, this is very nice," said Mrs. Kelwyn, absently, from her apparent absorption with the milk which she was inspecting in its pitcher. "There seems to be something in the milk—"

"Is that *so*?" Mrs. Kite inquired, interestedly. "It *does* look kind of speckled." She examined it, and then sat down again with the jug in her lap. "Must 'a' got in from the rafters in the cellar. But I can get you some warm from the cow as soon as Alvin comes in from milkin'. I guess that will be clean enough."

"And could you get us a little fresher butter?" Mrs. Kelwyn pursued, passing the plate to Mrs. Kite, who took it passively.

"Why, ain't the butter all right?" she asked.

"It's rather strong," Mrs. Kelwyn admitted.

"Well, I guess I can fix that." Mrs. Kite put it in her lap with the milk-pitcher, and sat contentedly expectant.

"And I am afraid that the tea has stood rather long," Mrs. Kelwyn said. "You know that with this kind, you merely pour on the hot water and bring it to the table."

"My! We keep ours on the stove all day! I guess Alvin wouldn't think he was drinking tea unless he could taste the bitter. Well," Mrs. Kite rose in saying, "I'll get you the things as soon as I can, but, as I *said*, the fire's out, and—"

She left the rest to their imagination as she let herself into the kitchen, with the milk-pitcher in one hand, the teapot in the other, and the butter-plate in the hollow of her arm.

Kelwyn rose and put the bread beyond smelling-distance on the side-table.

"Now, don't you say one word, please," said his wife, "till we see what she can do."

"Oh, I'm not disposed to be critical. I'm rather sorry for her, though she didn't seem put to shame, much. I suppose I ought to have opened the door for her."

"She managed," said Mrs. Kelwyn, coldly.

In the kitchen presently they heard heavy clumping steps as of a man coming in, and after a moment what seemed a kind of hushed swearing. But a rattling of the stove-lids presently followed, and then the pungent odor of wood smoke stole encouragingly through the kitchen door. There was now and then the sound of steps, but there were spaces of silence in which the Kelwyn family drowsed in their chairs.

The door flew open at last, and Mrs. Kite came in with a pitcher. "Thought I'd bring in some milk

for the little boys while it was warm. The things will be ready right away now." She went out, cutting short with the shutting door the steady hiss of frying.

Mrs. Kelwyn put the pitcher to her face mechanically, and then set it down at arm's-length. Her husband silently looked question, and she audibly explained, "Cowy." They were helpless against a lack of neatness which gave the odor of the cow's udder to the milk, and Kelwyn thought how promptly they had once dismissed their milkman at home for cowy milk. The children were eagerly intent on the frying eggs, which then ceased to fry, leaving a long silence to ensue, till Mrs. Kite pushed open the door with one of her elbows and one of her feet, and reappeared with the fried eggs on a platter, and the teapot; Kite hulked in after her with a plate of biscuit and butter, and set them down with a glower at his guests and hulked out.

"I don't believe but what you'll find everything all right now," she said, "though I presume I *did* let the tea stand a little mite long, to your taste."

Mrs. Kelwyn said, "Oh, I dare say it will be nice," and Mrs. Kite, after a look at the table, flapped out, not cheerfully, but self-contentedly, on her heel-less shoes. Then the Kelwyns examined the food put before them.

The eggs, with their discolored edges limp from standing in the pork fat, stared up dimly, sadly; the biscuits, when broken open, emitted an alkaline steam from their greenish-yellow crumb; the tea was black again. Kelwyn remained scrutinizing the butter.

"What is it?" his wife asked.

"It looks like—sugar."

"*What?*"

He pushed it to her, and she scrutinized it in her turn. "It is—it actually is! She's tried to sweeten

it by working sugar into it!" She fell back into her chair, and tears came into her eyes. "What are we going to do, Elmer?"

"Here, Carl," said his father, recklessly, "have an egg. Have an egg, Francy."

"And a biscuit, papa?" Francy asked; and Carl parroted after him, "And a biscuit, papa?"

"Yes, all you can eat."

"Do you want to kill them, Elmer?" their mother palpitated.

"It's filth, but it isn't poison," said Kelwyn, and he spread each of the boys a biscuit with the sugared butter, and set them the example of eating the things put before them. "Give me some of that bitter black tea, Carry, with plenty of cowy milk in it."

"*I* want some cowy milk, papa," Francy whispered; and Carl whispered, too, "*I* want some cowy milk, papa."

"You shall have all the cowy milk you can drink," said their father, and he commanded their mother, who was keeping one hand on the teapot and the other on the milk-pitcher: "Pass me the cowy milk, Carry; give me some bitter black tea. Eat your blear-eyed eggs, boys, and have some more. Take another bilious biscuit, with plenty of sugar-butter on it. My dear, you're not eating anything!"

"Are you crazy, Elmer?" his wife demanded. "You won't sleep a wink. You'll be dead before morning."

"I shall not be dead unless that brute murders me in my bed, and if I don't sleep a wink I shall be awake to prevent him," Kelwyn said, not fearlessly, but recklessly.

The boys, rapt in their supper, did not hear him. His wife shuddered out: "What in the world shall we do?"

VI

THERE was that summer a great alarm of tramps. The times were bad, as they must be every now and then, in an economy as little regulated as the weather, and men without work were prowling the country everywhere. They were mostly long past the hope of work, or the wish for it, but they still wanted to eat. They found shelter for themselves in barns and hay-stacks, and any rags sufficed in summer; but a handout was good for only a few hours at a time, and the newspapers teemed with stories of the insolence and even violence which repaid the charity done the vagabonds.

After Kelwyn's visit to the place they had taken for the summer, it seemed more and more that it was a lonely place, and that he ought to have some means of defending himself and his family from tramps. While the farmer was about they need not fear, but he must often be away cutting the wood which was the Shaker Family's chief crop, and then the Kelwyns would be left unprotected. The truculent giant laughed when the notion was suggested to him; but he loosely agreed never to be out of call when Kelwyn was absent.

For safety when he was not absent, Kelwyn bought himself a pistol. His sense of the sacredness of property rights was strong, as it should be in a lecturer on Historical Sociology, and the pistol was as much to save their belongings as their lives from the tramps. As regarded his own property, Kelwyn had ideas of peculiar force, which he made apply as well to the small

estate brought him by his wife as to the little sum which he had put by from taking a pupil now and then; from his salary he could not put by anything. He held that if he caught a thief by night stealing his watch, for instance, or the silver which he had bought with his hard-earned savings, he would have a right to kill him. He often said this, and he believed that he should not have the least regret for such a deed.

When he went to buy his revolver he told the dealer that he would like something that was good for tramps, and the man offered him for ten dollars a pretty nickel-plated toy which he said was just the thing for tramps; Kelwyn rejected it in favor of a plain steel burnished affair at six dollars. He and the dealer had reciprocally admired each other's nonchalance in the transaction, but on the way home Kelwyn lost something of his self-satisfaction. There was a moment when, as the horse-car of those days tinkled toward his university suburb, with nothing to suggest a break in his monotonous revery, he suddenly realized with a neuralgic poignancy that his revolver was meant to kill a man, and that with it in his pocket he was a potential homicide.

These were the terms in which the case presented itself, and though Kelwyn perceived that they were so loosely descriptive as to be morally inapplicable, he could not instantly dismiss them. He had not dismissed them when he told his wife of his purchase. She had often agreed to his theory of the sacredness of all property, and the peculiar sacredness of his, and she had approved of his buying the pistol. But, as she said, she did not wish to see it. He asked her why, angrily, and whether she had not allowed him to get it. She said that she supposed she had, but she did not wish to see it. But the night after their first supper

in the old Family house of the Shakers, when the boys had been put to bed, too sleepy for their belated prayers, she asked, in the act of taking out her hair-pins, "Have you got that pistol?"

"Yes, I have," said Kelwyn.

"Let me see it!"

He went and got it out of his coat-pocket; he had not decided just where to keep it, and offered it to her.

"Ugh!" She started back. "Don't point it!"

"Who's pointing it?" he retorted. "I'm holding it toward the floor."

"I didn't know which the end was. And it might go through the floor and kill somebody. Is it loaded?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am! Look into the cartridge-chambers if you don't believe me."

Mrs. Kelwyn backed across the room. "That's the way half the accidents happen. Don't point it at your face!" Kelwyn was squinting into the chambers of the revolver. "How do you load it?"

"I'll show you." He got the box of cartridges from his trunk, and while his wife stood at the other side of the room he filled the chambers with them. "There!"

"Is that all? Is it loaded now?"

"Yes."

"And do you have to shoot it off to unload it?"

"No, you can take the cartridges out," he said, and he showed her how.

"And the cartridges can't shoot off of themselves?"

"Certainly not."

"And the pistol can't shoot without them?"

"Of course it can't!"

"Give them to me." He obeyed, and she put the box on the stand at the bedside. "Now put the pistol on

the chair on your side, and I shall feel perfectly safe. Promise me you won't try to load it unless you hear some one coming into the room."

"Much good it will do then! You mustn't be ridiculous, my dear. If the pistol is to be of any use I must have it loaded where I can put my hand on it at the slightest alarm. Didn't you understand that?"

"Yes, I understood it, but I didn't realize it. I couldn't bear to have you shoot any one, Elmer. Should you like to?"

"I shouldn't choose it, but if a tramp—"

"We must risk the tramps. The Kites would hear any one from their room off the kitchen. I'm more afraid of him than of tramps."

There was no logical sequence in her reasons or sensations, but both were intelligible to Kelwyn.

Shorter men will pityingly protect a tallish woman from her fears when she begins to whimper, and now, when Mrs. Kelwyn began to whimper, Kelwyn pulled her head over on his shoulder, and put his arms around her, and patted her on the back. "Come, come," he said.

"Oh, Elmer," she bleated, "we are in such a terrible box!"

"Oh no, we're not, my dear. It's been disappointing and disheartening. But it isn't desperate. You'll see everything in a different light to-morrow. Besides, we're not bound to stay here, or to let the Kites stay. The place is ours; we're masters of the situation."

He imparted his own courage to her, and he was aware of her having it all when he had succeeded in quieting her nerves. From the distance to which the Shaker holdings had pushed the neighborhood there came not even the sound of dogs barking. The muffled noise of Kite's horses stamping came from the old Family stable.

The whippoorwills, which seemed to abound in the woods and pastures, filled the moonlight with the whirring of their swift arrowy calls. One of the blood-curdling brood ventured from covert and perched on the well-curb, where he sat and whistled in his ghastly muted note and would not be hushed away.

Just before daybreak Kelwyn was wakened by Kite swearing joyously at his horses in the stable. He dozed, and two hours later he was roused again by the parley between his tenant-host and the fish-man who halted his cart to join in the morning blasphemy of the farmer, and to sell him a mackerel for the Kelwyns' breakfast. Mrs. Kelwyn slept through all, and she outslept the two boys, whom their father helped dress when they came tiptoeing in from the next room to see if he were awake.

VII

The coffee that morning was worse than the tea; the milk was speckled from the cellar rafters again; the mackerel had been fried in lard. But the Kelwyn boys enjoyed the hot soggy biscuit, with the sugared butter on them; and then they asked to be excused, and stole out to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Kite's boy, who had lurked at the kitchen door through the meal, looking in and luring the young Kelwyns when his mother passed to and fro.

"Now, Elmer," Mrs. Kelwyn began, in a tone of reinvigorated virtue which in itself was an irritation to his spent nerves. It is one of the advantages of marriage that both the parties to the compact are seldom in the same mind or mood, and one of its disadvantages that with this useful variance they are as often hurtful as helpful to each other. They cannot always agree about a question, though they see both sides of it. If one is cheerful they keep a sort of balance, though the other is gloomy, even though they do not unite in a final gayety.

Mrs. Kelwyn made a sort of pause after challenging her husband's attention, and he was rasped into rasping out, "Well?"

"Well, you see for yourself it won't do."

"Did I say it would do?"

"No, I don't mean that. But last night you said I would see it differently in the morning."

"That was to keep you from breaking down alto-

gether. And it seems to have carried you through the night pretty well."

"Yes, and I appreciate that. But now we have got to face the facts, and the facts are that she won't do, and can't do, and don't seem to care to do. Now what shall *you* do?"

"It seems to me it's for you to say what I shall do," he temporized. "I'll do whatever you say."

Mrs. Kelwyn was appeased by the comparatively soft answer when she might have encountered active defiance. "I suppose that I could go to the kitchen and teach her, but do you think it is my place to do that?"

In their earlier life together, when life was simpler, it had sometimes happened that in the intervals of general housework girls whom they could alone afford to keep, Mrs. Kelwyn had not only cooked, but had done all her work. He aided her about it, and they always looked back rather fondly to those times when they seemed to draw closer to each other in their mutual help. It had now passed vaguely through his mind that she might, indeed, do just the thing she suggested; and something in his silence must have said so to her wifely subtlety.

"Well, then, I can tell you, Elmer," she continued, as if he had spoken, "I'm not going to do it. I might as well ask you to go out and show him about his farm-work." She knew very well that this did not follow, but he did not say so; he did not say anything; and she had to resume: "Besides, she couldn't learn, and she wouldn't wish to. We must go and see the Shakers at once. *They* are our landlords."

"Well, I'll get the horse."

Mrs. Kelwyn lamented: "How precipitate you are! I want to talk it over first."

It came to some such point again and again, but the

days went by and the Kelwyns had done nothing decided. There were alleviations, or illusions of alleviations, when the Kites seemed to do better, or when the Kelwyns had become so used to their doing badly that they had lost the sense of better things. They accused themselves of lapsing into barbarism, of degenerating, and in a measure they were really corrupted by the many comforts, almost mounting to luxury, of the situation. Their housing had not ceased to be less delightful than at first, and Mrs. Kite's housekeeping, when it was spread over the twenty-five rooms of the old Family house, ceased to have a positive ineffectiveness. If she did not sweep or dust, it was because the prevalent cleanliness demanded no sweeping or dusting from her: the cleanliness was as if permanent, like the floors, and walls, and windows. With Kite's six feet of rugged strength between him and the tramps, Kelwyn slept more securely than if he had in each hand a revolver united with its cartridges. By day he went berrying in the pastures with his boys and the Kite boy, or wrote on the sociological lectures which were to be so impressive as to leave no room for question of a professorship with the overseers. He was inactively conscious that besides the small Kite boy, there was in the household a half-grown boy who had been adopted by the Kites, and a Canadian hired man, who helped about the place and did odd jobs of carpentering for the neighborhood. His name was Réné, and to make others sure of it he spelled it Raney. Like her husband and the big boy, he seemed to look up to the woman with implicit deference and admiration, which in its way became one of Mrs. Kelwyn's trials, and remained for her to the last a baffling anomaly.

In the long evenings following the early supper, which in their eagerness to have it over they despatched

promptly, Kelwyn sat with his family on the door-step, and listened to the hermit thrushes in the woods near by and then later to the muted whistling of the whip-poorwills that whirred through the cool, damp air close about them and dropped like soft clots of earth in the grass. Now and then the Kites, unbidden, but unforbidden, joined them; the woman gliding back and forth in the dusk, after a fashion she had, and talking in her high, sweet voice; and the man listening to her with rapt admiration. One evening he told of his boyhood in northern Vermont, where he was born, and of the bears that came down from the hills and frightened the children going to school. He made a picture of the poor hard life his people had lived, and Kelwyn felt himself in danger of getting on human terms with him. Another evening he was mowing the grass around his wife's clothes-line under the apple-trees, and he called to the Canadian farm-hand, who was in the way frolicking with the big boy, "Look out, Raney; I'll couper your legs." He drove his scythe into the ground.

"You'll couper some little stones," Raney joked back. He threw himself into one of the trees, and hung from a limb by his toes, and Mrs. Kite said:

"You didn't know my husband could talk French. Well, he was brought up, part of the time, close to Montreal."

She was proud of his talking French, though she must have known he could not read English; and apparently they had standing in the neighborhood. One evening a slattern woman with a baby in her arms, and a barefooted ragged little girl hanging to her skirt, came down the road, and halted across the way from the group at the door. "Look a-here, Mr. Kite, I want to know what you been sayin' to Tad about me. He's turned me out-o'-doors."

Kite was letting his horse crop the doorside grass while it cooled in the twilight, after a hot day's work, and he answered, between jerks at the halter and curses of the beast, that he had not been saying anything. "But I can tell you, Tad and you are both as ugly as the devil; I sha'n't meddle with you: but you're a disgrace to the whole neighborhood. You go home and tell him I say if he don't stop turnin' you out-o'-doors he'll get where he'll want somebody should turn *him* out."

Mrs. Kite watched the woman away in silence; then she explained to Mrs. Kelwyn: "He's that drunken Tad Allson lives down the road here a piece, and they fight the whole while. I don't see why they can't live peaceable. One thing, Mr. Kite's *talked* to 'em enough." She put on the air of social leadership; she caught sight of the big boy coming from the barn with a pail in each hand, and said, with smooth self-approval, "Well, I guess I must go and see after my milk."

The Kelwyns passed from moods of hopeful forbearance to moods of intolerant despair, but there was no change in their condition. Often it seemed to them like a bad dream they were living, and once Kelwyn said that he felt as he did in a nightmare when he knew he should wake and find it was only a nightmare. But a month passed in their nightmare, and they did not wake from it. Then one morning they got back to that point where they must go and see the Shakers, and once more Kelwyn said he would get the horse.

He really went out to the barn and asked Kite to bring the horse and buggy to the house. Kite had his team hitched to his mower, and was beginning to curse them out into the road toward the mowing-piece of the Shakers.

He glared at Kelwyn, who stood firm for a man whose soul shook within him, and swore under his breath. But the terms of their contract seemed to recur to him, and he dropped the reins and went about harnessing the old mare appointed for the Kelwyns' use. Kelwyn returned to the house with the perspiration starting in the palms of his hands, and did not come out again till he came out under Mrs. Kelwyn's lee: by that time Kite had left the buggy at the door, and was hulking back to the barn full of hushed blasphemy from the crown of his flap-brimmed straw hat to the soles of his high-topped rubber boots.

Mrs. Kelwyn was preoccupied in dramatizing her scene with the Office Brother at the Shakers, and did not notice the fury of Kite. She rehearsed the scene aloud most of the way to the Office, and it appeared that the action was to fall altogether to Kelwyn; she was to remain one of the mute witnesses whose silence contributes on the stage to render dialogue effective.

At the door Brother Jasper met them with a letter, which he said he was just going to carry them: he wanted to ask them how they were getting on, anyway.

"Oh, well," Mrs. Kelwyn answered, with a certain provisonality, and opened the letter after glancing at the superscription, and noting to her husband: "It's from Cousin Thennie— Good gracious!" she gasped out, after a glimpse of the open sheet. "She's coming to stay over Sunday! Well, she mustn't; she can't! Elmer, you must stop her! You must telegraph her! With everything going from bad to worse, you must see yourself that she can't come. Now, what are you going to do?" she demanded, and at the same time she appealed from his face of helpless dismay to the Office Sisters' faces of helpless sympathy. "I was just com-

ing to you," she explained, "to know what in the world we can do about the Kites. They are impossible."

The Office Sisters made a gentle movement of hopeless intelligence. Sister Saranna broke the silence with, "I don't know as I want to criticise Jasper any, but I was afraid!" She shut her lips and softly shook her head, capped in stiff white gauze from the nape of her neck to the rims of her steel-bowed spectacles.

"And here's my cousin," Mrs. Kelwyn intensified the case, "coming out over Sunday for a little rest! A little rest in *that* house! *Will* you telegraph and stop her, Elmer?" She pushed the letter at him and he had to take it. "Drive to the station instantly, and I will stay and explain to the Sisters, and see what can be done. Don't lose an instant!"

"But won't it be rather awkward," he began, "stopping her?"

"Don't say such a thing, Elmer! Will it be graceful to let her come? Oh, go!"

With a man's fatuous wish to escape from present trouble, no matter what destruction his flight leads to, Kelwyn went out of the door, and his wife heard him drive off, as she dropped into a rocking-chair and began to unfold her trouble to the Sisters, seated in rocking-chairs before her. At the climaxes she made pauses, and in the pauses the three women rocked excitedly toward one another.

At the last climax of all Mrs. Kelwyn arrested herself in the act of plunging violently forward on her rocker and asked, "What's that?" It was a sound like the unfolding and folding of a newspaper, which seemed to be made purposely loud, as if to warn them of some unseen presence, or to keep a hidden witness from the involuntary guilt of eavesdropping. The noise came from the sort of parlor, or reading-room, which opened

across the hallway from the Office. "Is there some one over there?"

The taciturn Sister tittered, and Saranna said: "Poor Jasper! I don't know what's to become of him, now. He was just going to ask if you could take the young man, there, in with you."

"A boarder!" Mrs. Kelwyn thought she had shrieked it, but she had only gasped it, in the sort of hoarse whisper that people use in nightmares.

"Well, no," Saranna said. "More like a roomer. He could get his meals here, I guess. But all our rooms that we give to the world outside are taken up by the visiting Brothers from Canbury for the week that's to come."

"We couldn't think of it," Mrs. Kelwyn returned, promptly, and a shade indignantly.

There came another newspaper stir from across the hallway, as if the young man in the parlor had heard but had tried not to hear.

Saranna said, an octave lower: "That's what I told Jasper. But he seemed to think that if you felt lonely any, when Friend Kite was away, daytimes, it might comfort you to have another man about the house. I mean if Friend Kelwyn has to go to Boston, ever."

Mrs. Kelwyn suspended her answer with a frown. "Does he want to stay all summer?"

"He could come over here when the visiting Brothers are gone. He wants to work in the garden for us."

Mrs. Kelwyn did not relax her frown. "Is he a laboring-man?"

"I don't know as he is." Saranna rocked, and smoothed her lap with one hand, while she kept the other on her breast. "He ain't sunburnt any, and his hands don't look it."

"What *is* he?"

"He didn't say."

"Well!"

The woman had sunk their voices low, and now they dropped into silence, unbroken by the creak of their rockers.

The young man made a louder rustling of his newspaper, and a clash, self-explained as final when it was followed by a sound of his rising. He came across the hall with what Mrs. Kelwyn, even in her dismay, decided to be a cultivated walk, and showed himself in the office doorway. He was well enough dressed, but by the clothier rather than the tailor; his bearing was gentle, with a trace of involuntary authority of some sort. He had a thoughtful knot between his thoughtful eyes; his face, of a clean-shavenness rare in those days, showed a delicate surface; his chin, to which he put up a long, spare hand, was fine; his cheeks were rather thin, as those of youth are apt to be; his still gray eyes looked out under straight, brownish brows, and a crop of light-colored hair refused to observe any careful order above it.

"I had to overhear what you ladies were saying," he began, in a quiet, unimpassioned tone, as if he had thought the matter out and had made himself personally exterior to it as far as his sensibilities might have been concerned. "I wanted to tell you that you mustn't have me on your minds, any of you. I can understand why it wouldn't always be desirable to receive a stranger under one's roof, and I'm not afraid but I can get a room somewhere if it is all right about the work. As for what I am, I *am* a laborer, in one sense. I am a teacher, or have been; but I was brought up on a farm, and I know about gardening. This is my vacation, and I like to work while I'm resting." He paused, and then he made a seriously deferential bend toward the

ladies, and turned and walked down the hall toward the threshold, where he stood leaning against the door-jamb looking out, while Mrs. Kelwyn and the Office Sisters sat looking at one another.

It appeared that he had gone to the front door to be the more readily rid of his embarrassment, for he returned presently toward the door of the parlor, where Mrs. Kelwyn arrested him with an apologetic noise in her throat. "I beg your pardon?" he questioned.

"I am sorry," she said, "that you should have heard what I said. But perhaps it was best. I wish to explain that besides never having thought of an inmate, we are in the hands of such a terrible family that we don't know from hour to hour whether we shall stay ourselves in the house we have taken. It's a delightful house, and there is such an abundance of rooms that I don't wonder Brother Jasper, and the Sisters here, thought we might spare one for you, and under some circumstances—" She found herself speaking from a kindness for this young man which had won upon her, and she had to check herself somewhat haughtily. "But as it is, it isn't to be thought of." She added, with new relenting: "I mean quite as much on your account as our own. I couldn't give you an idea of the strait we are in. The people who have, as our tenants — it's rather complicated, but I needn't burden you with the details—undertaken to board us and keep house for us have turned out perfect failures. They can't cook, and they are careless to the last degree; and what we shall do, after getting so well settled, I'm sure I don't know."

She addressed her troubles to a certain general interest in the young man's face, but he caught at one point only. "Cook?" he tardily echoed.

"No, *not* cook! Not the least in the world!"

"I meant," he said, "are they willing to learn?"

"Really," Mrs. Kelwyn said, in a putting-down tone, "I don't know. But *I* am not willing to teach."

"I didn't mean that," the young man returned, gently.

Though he was still not what she would have called a gentleman, he was more and more evidently a person of some sort of refinement. She felt a rise of respect for him when he now added: "As a visitor for the Associated Charities, I saw a good deal of the domestic life of the poor, and I didn't find the cooking so bad in any of the foreign households as our New England country fare. Somebody ought to go into the farm kitchens and teach the women, by precept and example both, that cookery is a science, and that it is to be studied and respected as such."

Mrs. Kelwyn had gone forward to the door of the parlor where the young man had halted when she addressed him, and they had remained there talking, while the Office Sisters went about their household functions. She was going to reply in cordial acquiescence with him, when she was arrested by the noise of wheels on the gravel before the office, and the voice of her husband calling a more vigorous "Whoa!" to their old mare than would have brought a far more impetuous animal to a stand. At the same time a girl's voice joyously shouted, "Hello, Cousin Carry!"

"Good gracious!" Mrs. Kelwyn groaned, in a sotto voce dismay; but she cried gayly, as she hurried toward the front door, "Why, are *you* there, Thennie?"

"Yes," the girl's voice answered. "I decided I wouldn't wait for my letter to reach you; I would come and tell you myself. Wasn't that thoughtful of me?"

An emotional tumult of cries and kisses now reached the young man where Mrs. Kelwyn had left him, and

amid a jubilation of welcome from her, and ejaculated explanations from the girl, he heard from Mrs. Kelwyn such specific bursts of anxiety, addressed to her husband, as: "Did you get the steak? And some fresh butter? And bakers' bread? I hope you remembered the bacon! And the prunes? You didn't forget some English breakfast tea and a bit of cheese! The crackers? Well, then, I think we can live through your visit, Thennie."

There followed question of whether the buggy seat would hold all three of them, and then there followed a sound of creaking springs and a crunching and grinding of wheels, with some laughs of terror, and the buggy rattled away, and the young man went to the parlor window and watched its retreat down the road toward the South Family House.

VIII

Parthenope Brook was not Kelwyn's cousin, as one might have inferred from the note of inculpation in Mrs. Kelwyn's voice when she read her letter over in the Office. She was a just woman, as she believed; Parthenope was her own cousin, and she could not deny it; she would not, perhaps, have denied it if she could. The girl was not even a first cousin; she was a first cousin once removed, and in this fact Mrs. Kelwyn had an additional motive for acquitting her husband of the blame which she at first involuntarily laid upon him. If the girl's coming without being asked was, under the circumstances, an indiscretion not far from a liberty, still it was not a liberty from his side of the family, as she more and more clearly recognized in more and more reconciling herself to the situation. She began, on the way from the Office to the South Family House, to bow to the stroke, and before she reached the house she was ready to acknowledge that nobody was to blame; hardly the girl herself was to blame. The way Parthenope listened to the story which Mrs. Kelwyn more continuously than coherently poured out upon her was a positive merit, and it ended in a climax of the virtues inherent in Mrs. Kelwyn's family.

The girl was no longer in her early twenties, but she seemed much younger, perhaps because she had been born of very youthful parents, who had gone out from a Boston suburb to Italy in those simple days when living in Italy was almost a brevet of genius. The

Brooks were both artists, but after their baby came Mrs. Brook grew rather more a mother and less a painter, and her husband rather more a sculptor if not less a father. He devoted himself to the sort of genre sculpture which was then of easier sale than now, but he thought himself fortunate to be put under agreement with a Boston house which dealt in objects of art as well as watches, clocks, and jewelry to give it all he could do, or, as the contracting partner phrased it, his entire output, for a fixed sum annually. The first year of this arrangement had not expired when he and his wife both died of Roman fever, which foreigners living in Rome formerly contended could be taken only in Naples, where the Brooks had gone for some of the classic motives of genre sculpture to be best studied there in the Museo Borbonico.

It was in Naples that their little one was born, and in recognition of the classic name of the city they called her Parthenope. At times they did not know but they had weighed the child down with a name too massive for such a mite; but they justly held that Parthenope and Brook were words that flowed musically together; they began by calling her Thennie, and in their lifetime they never got so far as Parthenope. The aunt, who had brought her home after they died, had wished to use the full name, but she was not able to do so at once, in her tenderness for the orphan baby. Parthenope herself, as soon as she arrived at the consciousness of young ladyhood, and the sense of dignity which is more abounding at sixteen than at twenty-six, always wrote herself Parthenope Brook. She asked her girl friends to address her so, and two or three of the nearest tried to do it, but to the others she was Thennie Brook, as she continued to be with Miss Brook, her aunt, and with her cousins the Kelwyns, and all her elder contem-

poraries. The world had not yet arrived at the mood in which it now rejects pet names and nicknames, and gives young people the full count of their baptismal syllables, and with most of Parthenope's fellow-students at the Art School, to whom she condescended from a higher social level, there was an instinctive reluctance to add possibly to the altitude she maintained by any sort of concession. She was not exactly conceited, the girls who analyzed their feelings toward her said; she was not exactly topping; but, if you could understand, she was so full of initiative (her critics valued themselves on the word, which one of them had got out of a review) as to need all the putting down you could quietly give her; in fact, her initiative might be called self-sufficiency, though that, her critics owned, was oversaying it rather. At the worst, perhaps, she was disposed to offer gratuitous instruction, which would have come with better grace from one who was herself a more devoted student, and did not help herself out so much with *chic*. But she was often really very nice, and her wish to control other people sometimes passed into self-control, and then she really *was* nice.

Her initiative had early made itself felt with her aunt, who lapsed year by year from the pitying authority in which the child's bereavement had placed her, and let Parthenope have her way in most things. The consequence was that Parthenope grew up with something like over-initiative as regarded her aunt, whose life she regulated according to her own conceptions of what was good for her, rather than her aunt's vague preferences. Her aunt went, or came, or remained, much as Parthenope decided, and neither realized that Parthenope had decided, though the fact was clear to spectators. Certainly the girl was all affection and thoughtfulness; and if in the present late

cold spring she had decided that they had better stay in Boston till well toward the summer instead of going as early as usual to Pigeon Cove, where one died of one's own dulness in the old-fashioned resort, she had not decided selfishly, if she could judge from her sufferings in the wilderness that Boston had become in June. It was a wilderness that she said did not even howl, and amid its silence there had one night come to her the question whether she was getting all the good out of the Art School which might have come to her in some atelier abroad, say Paris. While her aunt, in the comfort of her old home on the Hill, contentedly waited Parthenope's initiative, and sometimes even said that she did not see why they should go away at all, the girl began to let her initiative get the better of her in the direction of Europe. In tacitly yielding to it, she hoped that she was not unreasonable, and she knew she was not fantastic; but if not Europe, was there not some other place they could go to for the summer? This question recurred the more persistently because her aunt would have been so placidly willing to go anywhere she said, and thus put her on her conscience.

What she really wanted, it now came to her in a flash, was a fresh point of view, and in another flash it came to her that there could be no point of view so fresh as that of her cousins the Kelwyns, from that house which they had so quaintly taken from a Shaker community. It was a thing so original that she would not have expected it of them on any other ground than economy, for she knew they were rather poor; at the first she had felt some stirrings of curiosity as to their experiment, but these had already quite subsided before she now suddenly perceived that there was no one she could advise with so hopefully. She at first thought of surprising the Kelwyns and then not quite surprising them,

and when she wrote that she was coming she did not really mean to leave them without the choice or the chance of forbidding her to come.

One of Parthenope Brook's ideals was a regard for others which she did not attempt to realize in an altruistic devotion to need of any kind, so much as in the divination of comfortable people's rights and the resolution to square them with her duties. She was strictly a product of the country and city which she could hardly remember were not her native country and city, and of her time, which was the same wherever cultivated persons were born. It was the time when youth was very much characterized by its reading, which was very much more in poetry than it is now, and by fiction which it must be owned was better, with all its faults, than the fiction glutting the souls of our contemporary youth. After the prevalence of Italian with the better class intellectuals, there had followed a tide of German, in the ebb of which Parthenope was stranded upon a narrow acquaintance with German poetry; she had read a few songs of Heine and ballads of Uhland in the original; she could sing two or three, and she was considered by other girls a perfect German scholar. In English literature Swinburne had then risen and filled the sky with a light which was not quite steadfast, and Browning was a growing cult, but Tennyson was supremely read and quoted in such measure as almost to color the whole parlance of emotion. Longfellow was held in a tender and reverent esteem; the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table still ruled the words and thoughts of his fellow-citizens and fellow-countrymen, and the cold fire of Emerson was increasingly lighting if not heating their minds. In Parthenope's peculiar circle, Thackeray was held a cynic and a pessimist, especially regarding women, and was

only found out by the prophetic few a kindly sentimentalist. She had been taken by her aunt to hear Dickens read in Tremont Temple, after her aunt's serving-man had stood in line all night to get tickets for them in the coldest December weather known even in Boston. Lectures of all kinds were still much frequented, but they were already degenerating from the edification of the intellectually elect to the amusement of the common-schooled masses. The theatre held a doubtful place in the honor and pleasure of the great world, which was in Boston as elsewhere the small world. Fechter, Salvini, Bernhardt, Ristori, the younger Kean, were some of the planets from the remoter skies which lured the upper classes to the noble old Boston Theatre, where strange meteoric splendors of Offenbach opera misled them from the truth illustrated by the Symphony Concerts.

Girls of Parthenope's age, however, were formed rather upon the novel than the drama. George Eliot, Charles Reade, Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell and lesser sybils, with the nascent American fictionists of the *Atlantic Monthly* school, inculcated a varying doctrine of eager conscience, romanticized actuality, painful devotion, and bullied adoration, with auroral gleams of religious sentimentality. Womanhood stood high in the temple of the cult where the votaries of these authors worshipped. Parthenope herself had never observed among her acquaintance that girls were really nicer than young men, but she believed that they ought to be won by heroes who sacrificed or ventured a great deal for them, rescued them from some sort of peril, or risked their lives for them even when they were not in danger; if not, they must fall a prey themselves to some terrible accident, or be seized with some sickness in which the heroines could nurse them up from

the brink of death to the loftier levels of life in happy marriage. If a hero would not fall sick, or imperil life or limb, or sublimely rest guiltless under the blame of some shame or crime that would otherwise be laid to the heroine's charge, he could believe some other man in love with her and give her up to him. This would go far to win her, especially if the hero died of his renunciation or fell into a decline. On her part there was a reciprocal duty to give him up to some girl whom she knew to be in love with him, though she knew also that he was in love with herself. But, generally speaking, heroines were born, not made or self-made; one need only be of the female sex in order to be the aim and desire of the noblest of men. As yet the baddish heroine did not abound, and the married flirt spread ruin only in a restricted area. A hero might properly be of the moneyed or leisure classes, but he was best as some sort of artist, because more portable than the business or professional man, who could not follow the heroine so far afield in her summer disoccupation. He must not keep a shop or be a mechanic, but he could very well be of the simplest origin, like David Dodd in *Love Me Little, Love Me Long,* and could easily win a fastidious and patrician heroine by the force of his native genius or fervent passion.

There was a moment when Parthenope had thought of writing stories; she sent a few manuscripts about to editors; but her attention was turned to art in time to console her for their rejection. Athletics, on anything like the present scale, were as yet not; but æsthetics were even more than they are now. In the form then called household art they abandoned themselves to the decoration of interiors; their storks stood about on one leg on stone bottles, flower-pots, and chair-backs everywhere; their lilies and rushes bent and bristled on

the panels of all the doors. Almost anything might be done with tiles, especially encaustic tiles, and a great deal might be accomplished in the simpler interiors with square-headed brass spikes; Eastlake furniture and Morris' wall-paper were equally sources of inspiration. Ruskin was the absolute authority in the realm of architecture; much was still expected of the Gothic; and in the mean time the cities and suburbs were filled with empirical guesses in brick and wood, which still largely remain the wonder of posterity. Parthenope had once fancied in her early revolt from the unrealities of household art of being herself an architect; but, as she was a girl of decided and unswerving purpose, she ended by entering the school of the Museum of Fine Arts, which she might or might not make the gateway to the great world of painting in Europe. In the mean time she drew with fitful industry under her masters, and *chicqued* a kind of water-colors, which she knew she had not invented and which she did not wholly respect.

IX

After what Mrs. Kelwyn had now told her, and still more after what she had said she could not begin to tell her, Parthenope could not have been surprised that Mrs. Kite was not at the door to receive them. But with spirits uplifted by the glory of the June day, and with senses filled with the odor of the clover-heads and the blackberry blossoms of the roadsides, and the song of the bobolinks and orioles in the fields and dooryards on the way from the station, all the pathos of Mrs. Kelwyn's squalid tragedy could not blight her. From the provisions which Kelwyn had laid in at the village store she capably helped prepare a meal at which she could not have imagined herself an unwelcome guest; she laid the table with a fresh cloth, and with cutlery and china rubbed for double assurance of cleanliness after Mrs. Kite's washing and wiping; so that when Kelwyn had opened the can of tongue which he had got unbidden, and Mrs. Kelwyn had sliced it and cut the loaf of baker's bread, they had what she hoped she was not swearing in calling a picnic for the gods. In order that the nectar to wash down the ambrosia should not be steeped to the strength of lye, which was still Mrs. Kite's notion of tea, Mrs. Kelywn had asked her with careful politeness to let her have the canister on the table, and to bring a pitcher of hot water from the stove; she had to praise, almost with tears, the thoughtfulness of her husband in having provided

a can of condensed milk which could not be cowy or speckled.

Parthenope had foraged for wild flowers among those which grew in the pasture just over the stone wall, and had filled a tall jug with columbines, clover-heads, and pink and white laurel; and she dropped, from the final task of arranging them, into her chair, and announced herself as hungry as a bear. Her coarse, yellowish-brown hair was, in fact, not unlike the pelt of a cinnamon bear in color, but in the classic knot at the nape of her rounded neck, and the dull rose of her cheeks, and her regular human features, there was nothing to remind one of a wild animal; even her eyes, which were gray and rather large, did not carry the idea of anything savage to the beholder. She was rather tall, in the fashion which quite so long ago as the early seventies was beginning to prevail among girls, but she was of no such towering height as now puts to shame the dwarfish stature of most men. One of the more noticeable features of her make-up, if hands are features, were her beautiful, long, rather large, and most capable-looking hands. Though she had used them mostly in drawing from the round, the flat, and the nude of late, and in *chicquing* her more original studies in composition, she had earlier employed them in putting and keeping her aunt's house in order, both directly and indirectly. She could, almost congenitally, cook and sweep and sew, and the time had been when it had seemed as if her gift lay in the direction of being mistress of a house of her own. But this was distinctly before her genius for painting had so strongly manifested itself, though now she recurred to those earlier inspirations with a pleasure which she felt in all the fingers of her beautiful hands. But she had hardly begun to serve herself with them in the satisfaction of

the sylvan famine she had boasted when she dropped her knife and fork and demanded, "Where are the boys?"

Mrs. Kelwyn started back, too. "Why, Elmer, where are the children?"

"The children?" he echoed. "I'm sure I don't know. We left them playing about here with that Kite boy when we went to the Shakers'. Perhaps they haven't heard the bell."

"There hasn't been any bell for them to hear," the girl said, and she caught up the bell from the table, as she jumped from her chair, and rang it at the open window. "That will fetch them, I hope."

It fetched Mrs. Kite, who appeared from the kitchen door. "Did anybody ring?" she asked, in her sweet treble.

"Oh!" the girl said, in dignified apology. "I was ringing for the boys. I suppose they don't know luncheon is ready."

In the anxieties of her hospitality, Mrs. Kelwyn had forgotten her children, but the fact seemed to her at first so much out of character that she made a feint of ignoring it. She had known mothers do very strange things with their families in moments of social preoccupation, and she would have excused this aberration of her own if she had been of a lower ideal concerning her duty to her children; but, as it was, some one must suffer for it, and now she said to Mrs. Kite, with severity, "If they're with your little boy, will you please send them to luncheon immediately?"

Mrs. Kite relaxed in a laugh. "Well, I guess they're with Arthur fast enough, wherever *he* is. They all went off together, the last I see of them, with that old hoss."

Mrs. Kelwyn referred the strange fact to her husband, who asked, "*What* old horse?"

"Well," Mrs. Kite responded, tolerantly, "I don't know as you *did* notice him before you left this mornin'. He come up the road from down Ellison way, and all three boys piled after him. I guess he's a hoss that somebody's turned out to die; he's a perfect stranger to me, though; large white hoss, blind on the off side, and awful frail-lookin'. Mr. Kite had gone off to his ploughin' by that time, and one of the boys catched him by the foretop and they all three got onto him."

Kelwyn followed her through the pronouns to the fact that the boys had mounted the horse and not Kite. "And where did they go?"

"Well, I guess you got me there," she submitted, and she joined the Kelwyns at the window in looking up and down the road.

"They couldn't got far," she said. "That hoss couldn't get anywhere with 'em if he done his best." She bent this way and that, looking over one shoulder and then the other of Parthenope. "Why, there they are *now*, just risin' the hill, and there's somebody leadin' him! Well, they *didn't* have no bridle."

The Kelwyns and their cousin ran down-stairs and out-of-doors to meet the wanderers. When they came near, the two Kelwyn boys burst into a loud crying; the Kite boy, from no personal motive, joined them, where they sat on the horse's back with their little legs spread far apart, and clinging, the foremost to his mane, and the others keeping on their perch by clasping each other round the waist.

"We got lost, papa!" Francy called to his father. Carl, apparently, could not do better than repeat, "We got lost, papa," and he repeated his brother's further explanation inculpating the Kite boy. "He wanted us

to get on, and then we couldn't stop him because we hadn't any bridle, and we couldn't get off because it was so hi-i-gh!" They rose an octave in the close and sobbed loudly.

Their father called, "Well, well! Never mind; it's all right now. Don't cry." Whatever obscure notion he had of teaching them a hardy spirit was not shared by his wife and her cousin, who ran forward, the first with a cry of, "Hush, hush!" and the other with a laugh of, "Oh, you poor darlings!" and embraced each a leg of the Kelwyn boys, abandoning the Kite boy to a moral isolation on the horse's neck, where he vainly continued to lift up his lament. The effect of his grief was to extract from his mother a promise which she kept her head out of the window above to deliver, "I'll *give* it to you, Mr. Arthur, when I get round to you."

This at least was something, and it so far consoled the boy that he looked down at the face of the young man who was holding the old horse by his foretop, and smiled through his tears as if recognizing a kindred spirit who could enter into a joke. As yet, neither of the women who were clinging to the legs of the Kelwyn boys had made any sign of seeing their rescuer, but Kelwyn himself now came forward and said, politely: "You're very good to have taken so much trouble with these scamps. Where did you find them?"

"Not very far off," the young man answered. "Just beyond the Office at the Shakers'."

The sound of his voice seemed to recall Mrs. Kelwyn to herself, and she said, "Oh!" As the young man released the foretop of the horse, which immediately fell to mumbling feebly at the wayside grass, and dusted his hands together, she began: "I beg your pardon. Isn't this the gentleman I met at the Office?"

"Yes," he said, and then there was a pause which

she decided to terminate in the only possible way under the circumstances.

"May I introduce my husband, Mr.—"

"My name is Emerance."

"Oh, thank you! And my cousin, Miss Brook."

Parthenope and the young man bowed, Kelwyn shook his hand, and Mrs. Kelwyn said toward her husband, "Mr. Emerance is staying with the Shakers for a few days," and she looked one of those comprehensive looks at Kelwyn which wives explain too late as meaning that their husbands shall be nice but cautious, and kind without committing themselves. Perhaps Kelwyn might have understood her look; but just then she loosed her grasp of her son's leg, and Parthenope dropped the leg of the other boy. The old horse made a witless movement forward, and as if they were the crew of a ship dragging her anchor, the boys wailed over their shoulders, "We haven't had anything to e-e-eat, mamma," and, "We're awfully hungry, mamma," the younger echoing the elder, as before, and prolonging his cadences in a shriller key.

Then the mother in Mrs. Kelwyn betrayed the woman of the world, and she said, "Well, don't cry; dinner is on the table now, and— Elmer! *Will* you lift them down?"

"Let *me* lift them down!" Parthenope demanded. She swung Carl earthward through the air, and the stranger did the like with Francy. Both boys stumbled, their legs having fallen asleep, and saved themselves from falling by a clutch on their cousin's and mother's skirts. The Kite boy, restored to cheerfulness, dug his heels into the horse's ribs, and the horse, moved by an instinct of food and shelter, jolted crookedly off toward the barn.

IX

Mrs. Kelwyn turned from watching him and bent a still absent-minded eye upon the young man whom his retreat had left upon her hands, but Kelwyn, realizing that the stranger, who had been so kind, had probably come out of his way and left his dinner at the Shakers' to bring their lost boys to them, said: "Won't you come and dine with us, Mr. Emerance? We were just sitting down."

His words recalled Mrs. Kelwyn to herself; she said, in afterward reproving him, that she was just going to make the invitation; and whether this was so or not she now did it. "Why, yes, Mr. Emerance, you must stay, of course. I was so distracted by that wretched animal," she apologized.

The young man demurred that the Shakers would be waiting his dinner for him, but he did not demur much. At the end Mrs. Kelwyn said, "Elmer, will you show Mr. Emerance to a room? And we will be ready as soon as you are." As the two men moved away submissively she mused aloud, horror-strickenly, "I don't suppose she's put either water *or* towels!"

"Let *me* go and see, Cousin Carry," Parthenope demanded, and she ran round the men and so quickly ahead that by the time Mrs. Kelywn had followed from the outside with her hungry and whimpering boys Parthenope was coming from her own room with a heavy water-pitcher between her hands and towels hanging from one of her tense arms.

"You were quite right, Cousin Carry," she said, over her shoulder, "and I can get some for myself just as well afterward." Then Mrs. Kelwyn heard her husband's dry-voiced recognition of Parthenope's service within the room where he had taken the guest, with the young man's grave protest and the girl's gay insistence.

After leaving the men to follow her to the dining-room, she had a moment there with Mrs. Kelwyn for one of those formulations of motive which women sometimes find essential with each other and sometimes not. "I thought I would do it, for if we kept him waiting till Mrs. Kite could get them it would embarrass him still more."

"Yes, of course. Though I don't know that he seems very embarrassed."

"That's what I meant. That stiffness of theirs is always so amusing. One wouldn't do anything in the world to let them see that one noticed it." She glanced at the table. "I'll get a plate for him. If we made Mrs. Kite— Shall I put him with the boys or let him have your whole right-hand side to himself? Or would that be too ceremonious? He shall have Francy next him, and I will take Carl under my wing."

"I think that will be best," Mrs. Kelwyn assented, still from the daze that the whole incident had wrapt her in. Her distraction gave her an effect of hauteur toward their guest when her husband returned with him, and she assigned him, with more majesty than she meant, the place Parthenope had chosen for him. During the meal her condescension wore away so far that by the time Parthenope was making coffee with the new machine which the Kelwyns had brought with them, and stored in the pantry against some occasion of experimenting with it, the hostess had reached the

level with her guest on which she had met him at the Office.

"As I told you, Mr. Emerance, we are here on the most provisional terms; and I feel like explaining that this is a—" She cast about for a descriptive phrase, and Parthenope, from peering anxiously into the performance of the coffee-machine, supplied it without looking up.

"Boughten lunch." She spoke lightly, but with authority, as one who dignifies a phrase by using it.

"Yes, and certainly I can say, without boasting, Mrs. Kite had no hand in it. I don't wish you to think I did her injustice in what I said this morning at the—"

She stopped and stared hard at the coffee-making, which had already fixed the gaze of Kelwyn, and now also held the eyes of the guest.

"Oh, *don't* all look so!" the girl protested, turning a flushed face toward them.

"I think you turn it over," Kelwyn suggested.

"Blow it out, my dear," his wife commanded.

"Not till it begins to pour from the spout," the guest interposed. "Now!" he bade her, and the fragrant stream fell smoking into the cup which Parthenope, with a shriek, had interposed in time.

If she obscurely resented his peremptory tone, she hospitably decided to say: "And you shall have the first sprightly runnings, Mr. Emerance, for truly instructing me. And, Cousin Carry, the next time you have a coffee-machine that you haven't tried yourself, don't let *me* try it. In another moment I should have been blown through the roof."

"Not quite so bad as that," the young man said. "They always look as if they would explode, but I believe they never do."

The incident relieved the tension in which the meal had passed. The Kelwyn boys had, first the older and then the younger, asked to be excused, and tottered away in a repletion which would be proof for a while against the lures of the Kite boy; and the talk began to ease itself more and more under the spell of the little cups.

"You spoke as if from a wide experience of coffee-machines," Kelwyn said, smiling over his drink.

"I've tried most of them," the guest explained. "You can make good coffee or bad coffee with any of them, but neither so good nor so bad as you can make with the simple old-fashioned coffee-pot, if you have the art of it."

"I should say Mrs. Kite *hadn't* the art, though she has the pot. Better recommend the machine to her, my dear," Kelwyn added to his wife. "You needn't tell her just when to put it out, unless you mind it blowing her through the roof. *I* shouldn't."

Mrs. Kelwyn usually thought this sort of joking from her husband rather coarse, but she herself was excited by the coffee and the escape to it from imminent danger, and now his joke did not seem so very coarse to her.

Kelwyn turned again to his guest. "You appear to have looked into the metaphysics of coffee-making."

"Not so much as the physics, perhaps," the young man answered. "I attended a cooking-school last winter."

The two women leaned forward, and Kelwyn tempered the common curiosity to a polite "Ah?"

"I didn't know," Emerance continued, "but I might take it up."

"I don't quite understand," Kelwyn ventured, with continued politeness.

"My digestion had given way in teaching, and I

suppose that was what directed my attention to the matter. I had a notion at one time of starting a summer school of cooking."

Mrs. Kelwyn shrank back in her chair, but Parthenope leaned farther forward. Kelwyn joined them in their silence, and the young man addressed him more especially. "And I still don't see why it shouldn't fall in with some of the modern humors of our civilization. People are going more and more into the country and for longer seasons, and the general tendency is a sort of reversion to nature in the way of camping in the Adirondacks and the Maine woods, away from the hotels and boarding-houses. I imagined a somewhat larger group of families than ordinarily camp together, who would be willing to form a school of cooking, if they could get teachers. If it became a fad first it might later become a serious study; and we all know how much knowledge in that direction is needed."

"*We* certainly know how much it is needed in *this* house," Mrs. Kelwyn said, and in her sense of injury through the ignorance which the young man's notion might have helped ultimately to abate, even in such as Mrs. Kite, she relented to him still more.

"And did you ever make an experimental test of the matter?" Kelwyn asked, with a superior smile, at which Parthenope again inclined herself a little.

"No," the young man hesitated, "I became interested in something else. My notion was not to let the school end with the summer people, but to work finally on the curiosity of the farmers and their wives. They suffer far more than townsfolk from wholesome food, badly cooked. The science of cooking interested me; it's a kind of chemistry, you know." He concluded toward Kelwyn, who nodded tolerantly, "No, I never brought the teaching to a practical test myself. But,

after learning how to cook, I couldn't help cooking for myself."

"Chafing-dish?" Kelwyn suggested.

"I went beyond the chafing-dish. I set up a little gas-stove in a room that I got next my study in the house where I lodged, and instead of going out to the meals which I used to get at the boarding-house across the street, I cooked my own meals, much more economically, and, I believed, æsthetically."

At the word Parthenope leaned forward at the first angle of interest, and he said, rather more to her than the others: "It isn't all fun. At least it wasn't for me. I believe ladies don't mind washing dishes—"

"As far as egg-shell china, we don't," the girl distinguished.

"I had no egg-shell china, and I minded the dish-washing. It was on that account that I was tempted to give up cooking, until I happened to think of wooden plates and paper plates, which could be cleansed by fire instead of water."

"But they," Parthenope instructed him, "want the woods and fields for a background; between walls they are hideous."

"They are not finally hideous," Emerance answered, with the deference that young men show in differing with girls, but not with all the submission she would have liked. "Their form is elementary yet, but that is something that might be studied, and their decoration might be carried much further than it has been."

"I suppose so," she assented, and then she suggested a step she believed he had missed. "But there would still be the pots and pans."

"I didn't know she had such a practical mind," Kelwyn said, jocosely, to his wife.

"Of course a woman would think of that," Mrs. Kelwyn explained.

"There would still be the pots and pans," the young man owned. "You can't boil and stew in wood, and you can't roast and broil on paper. But I've no doubt something could be cheaply substituted for wood and paper that could be as easily destroyed. Perhaps—"

Loud shrieks, as of a joyful dismay, rose from the roadside green under the dining-room windows: the voices of the two Kelwyn boys, and the voice of the Kite boy, who lifted it in a kind of mocking, as if at a mixed emotion in the others. To these the voice of Mrs. Kite was joined. "You come here, Arthur Kite; come right here, this minute! Boys, you look out he don't catch you! Mrs. Kelwyn!"

At this appeal Mrs. Kelwyn called severely to her husband across the table, "Elmer!" and then they both went to a window. Parthenope ran to another, where, seeing that Emerance modestly held back, she made room for him. Leaning over the sill together, they saw slouching toward the house the figure of a man in a flat cap, a short velvet jacket, and immensely wide velvet trousers, with shoes as broad almost and as flat as his cap; he supported his steps with a heavy staff and led by a chain a bear of about his own stature. The chain was attached to a ring in the bear's muzzled nose, and Emerance glanced for a moment from him at the pretty head beside him, as if involuntarily noting that the hair on it was of the same cinnamon color as the bear. He breathed a little sigh such as one gives when one has suddenly got the right word for something.

The man and the bear both looked hot and unhappy. The bear strained his small eyes round and upward, and the man let his glance follow, but neither made

as if to stop, and the Kelwyns, who had called their children up to them, began to feel that they had been needlessly anxious; the boys begged their father to make the man stay. While Kelwyn hesitated, the hired man, Raney, came round the corner of the house and called to the bear-leader in French. The poor are too much preoccupied with their poverty to be surprised at things which give the well-to-do the pleasurable emotion of the unexpected, and the man merely looked round at the sound of the familiar words. Then, as if he uttered the general wish, Raney called to him again and bade him make the bear dance.

It seemed a great cruelty, for the heat had been gradually mounting ever since morning, but Kelwyn did not interfere, even at his wife's urgence of the question of danger; he let the man, who had halted, slowly turn and come back. The bear, with a groan of compliance, rose to his hind legs and caught between his paws the staff which the man tossed him. But it seemed that he was not going to dance at once. He had histrionic gifts which were to be shown first in *Le bon Filleul qui va la Chasse,* and the staff was to play the part of a gun. At the successive stage directions of his leader he discovered the game, shouldered the gun, and fired. But apparently he always missed at first; at last when he hit, he was obliged to represent the victim himself. As *Un beau Mort,* he rolled in death, palpitant and stertorous; then he came to life, and rose to his hind legs and tilled the ground with his pole in the character of *Le bon Jardinier.* The dramatic passages of the entertainment now ended, and the ballet began. It was not intricate, but it was elaborate, and was faithfully performed to the music of the wild, brutal chant of which bear-leaders have the secret. The bear pranced and waddled, and snorted and panted through his muz-

zle while the man followed him up and retreated. The scene held the spectators spellbound till Parthenope put herself in the bear's place and cried out, "I should think the poor thing would die of the heat!"

Mrs. Kelywn saw the reasonableness of the apprehension, and with Raney's intervention she brought the ballet to a close. The boys were openly disappointed; but the bear was made to turn some lop-sided somersaults, which consoled them, and then the bear-leader called for some water, and Mrs. Kite brought it in a hand-basin, which the bear lay down to embrace with both paws, plunging his muzzle deep into the water and showing a joy pitiful to see. When he had sopped it all up the man asked for another basinful, and swashed it against the hairy breast of the bear which responded with grunts of rapture. He was so much refreshed that when the man lengthened his chain he climbed to the first crotch of the doorside elm, where he sat looking sleepily into the window to which the Kelwyn boys, with the unforbidden, if unbidden, company of the Kite boy, had rushed up-stairs to gloat upon him in the closest intimacy.

The bear-leader was himself a sight hardly less pitiable than the bear. He stood pallid and dripping with sweat; and with that dull, tormented air which seems proper to bear-leaders he told Raney the scant story of himself and his bear. He had himself taken the bear in the mountains near Toulouse; it was only fifteen months old now, and it was a little cub when he took it. He pulled on its chain; it reluctantly descended from its perch, and the two set off, equally inarticulate, after the man's growled thanks for the reward which had been thrown him from the windows whither he scarcely lifted his eyes. Mrs. Kite and Raney stood watching him, and Raney said to the windows that he

would rather work than do that; he added that he was going away to work for his board and two dollars and a half a day in Chester. He sauntered off toward the barn, and Mrs. Kite supplied for him the fact which Raney was perhaps too indifferent, or too proud, to declare himself: that his father lived in Nashua, where he owned a house of eight tenements, which he let for fifty dollars a month; there were a good many Kanucks living in Nashua. She then went indoors, and the others, who were still looking, as if helplessly, out of the window, were surprised by a sudden roar of thunder.

X

"Why, I believe we're going to have a storm!" Mrs. Kelwyn said. They all took their heads in apprehensively, but the two women put theirs out again curiously and made sure of the clouds which were beating up from the horizon and getting blacker and blacker below, while above they whitened densely toward the zenith. "Elmer," she continued to her husband, "did you think it was gathering for a storm?"

"I'm sure I hadn't noticed," he answered.

Parthenope said, with an inquiring glance at Emerance, "I'm sure I hadn't, either."

"I thought I heard thunder once before," the young man answered her. "But I was so much absorbed in the show that I didn't think of getting back to the Shakers'. Now I must make a run for it. Good-bye—good-bye!" He addressed himself to one after another and started for the door. "I think I left my hat below—"

"Why," Kelwyn as host interposed, "you mustn't think of going now till the rain's over."

"No, certainly not," Mrs. Kelwyn said, less hospitably, but more finally.

Emerance urged, with another glance out of the window: "I'm afraid I must. I'm ashamed to have intruded on you so long."

Mrs. Kelwyn rose to the occasion. "Not at all. I'm always so afraid of lightning."

"What is it? What is it?" Mrs. Kelwyn demanded.

Before Parthenope could answer, the voice of Mrs. Kite came: "Raney, go out and tell him he can't go into our barn! His bear 'll drive the hossis crazy."

"Ketch me go out in that rain," Raney's voice replied. "No hosses there, anyway, till Mr. Kite come back."

"Well, that's so," Mrs. Kite assented, in a lapse to her habitual ease of mind. "But we got to watch out when he does come. U-u-ugh!"

A long chain of flame swung from the woods beyond the open fields across the road, and from its hither end a vast globe of bluish fire dropped as if at the door, and the air was torn with an explosion which shook the house in every fibre; through the darkness and silence which followed, little crimson flakes like pieces of burning paper dropped earthward. A groan came from Mrs. Kelwyn; wails came from the boys; the hysterical laughter of Mrs. Kite, the shouts of Raney and Arthur, mixed with a cry from Parthenope. With her thought still on what she had last seen before that blinding flash and deafening roar, she entreated Emerance, "Oh, where are they, where are they?"

"I don't know," he answered. "Yes! Yes! There they are in the road—"

"They've been killed!" she shrieked. "They're both lying down! Oh, Cousin Carry, Cousin Elmer!" She put her hands over her eyes, and, with her whirling toward them, the Kelwyns pressed forward, forgetful of danger and duty, and by the successive flashes they saw in the streaming highway the bear and his leader prostrate and motionless.

"I don't believe they're dead," Emerance said. "I'm going to see—"

"I'm going with you," Parthenope defied all forbidding.

They had run toward the door, followed by a cry of cumulative warning from Mrs. Kelwyn.

"You'll be killed—you'll be wet through."

But the rain, in one of those sudden arrests which ensue upon such a violent burst, had ceased, and there was only the drip of the elms which overhung the road, where the play of the lightning now showed Emerance and Parthenope bringing help to the bear and his leader. Raney had joined them; but Mrs. Kite kept within her door, as firmly persuaded as Mrs. Kelwyn that her first duty was to herself. She could not keep her boy from running out to see the rescue, and in this Mrs. Kelwyn had the advantage; her boys preferred to look on with her from her window. Kelwyn said he was going to help, too, but his wife's will was stronger.

"Don't think of such a thing. You know they are doing everything, and if you go out into this storm you will die—you will be laid up with rheumatism."

He pointed out that it was not raining and there was not the least risk; in the end he had to content himself with thinking that perhaps she was right, after all.

Parthenope came hurrying in. "He's breathing," she panted, thickly. "Mr. Emerance wants some brandy. Have you got any?"

"Now, Elmer!" Mrs. Kelywn said, disappearing and reappearing at her chamber door. "What will you say *now* to my bringing what was left in the bottle you wanted me to throw away?"

"Is the bear breathing, too, Cousin Thennie?" Francy wistfully entreated, and Carl, with the same

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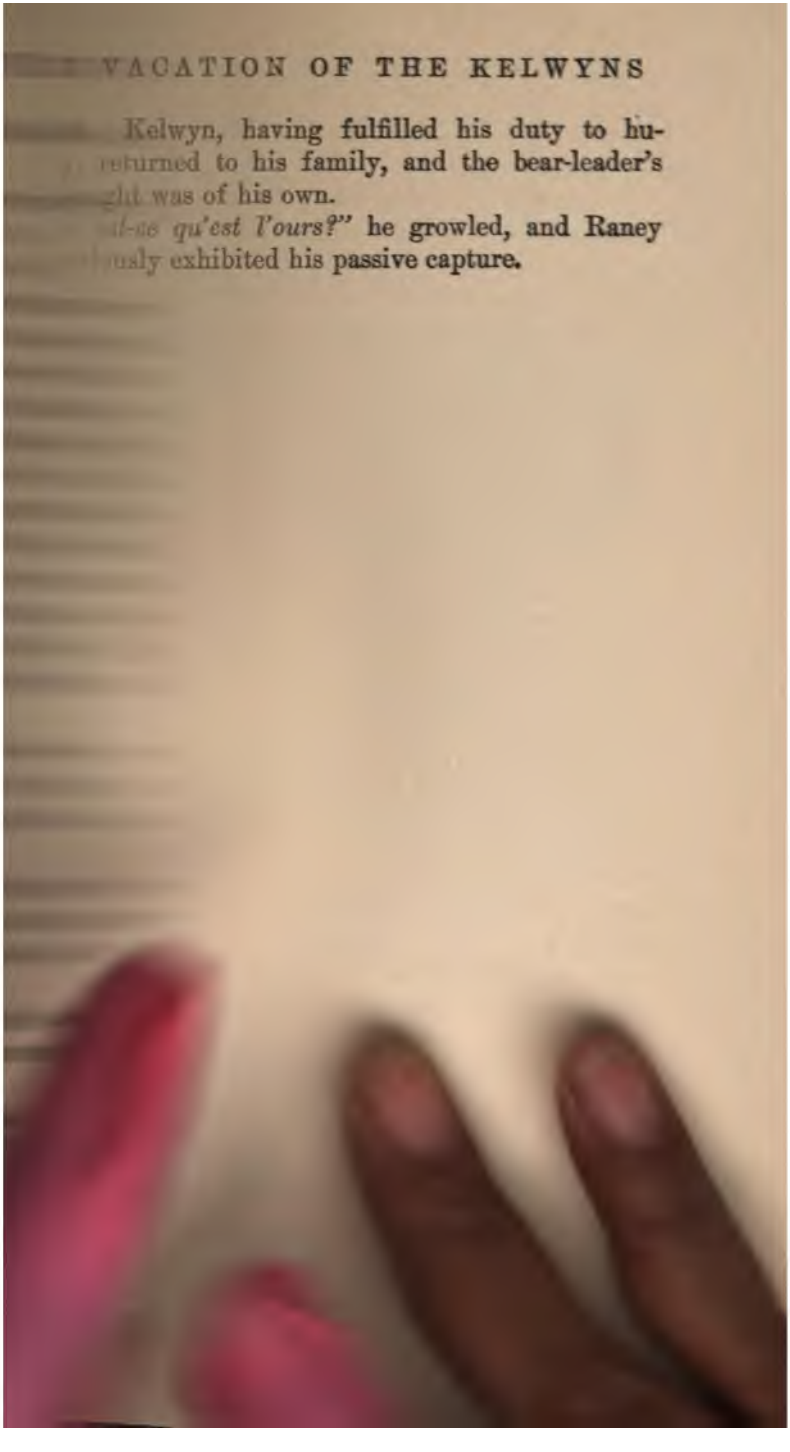
returned to his family, and the bear-leader's
ght was of his own.
-ce qu'est l'ours?" he growled, and Raney
usly exhibited his passive capture.



gentleness, implored, "Is the bear breathing, too, Cousin Thennie?"

"Yes, yes!" she called back over her shoulder to them as she ran out with the brandy. "That is—"

"I'm so glad the bear's breathing, too, mamma," and, "I'm so glad the bear's breathing, too, mamma," the boys said, in the order of their ages.

Their mother twitched each of them by the hand. "Hush! Be good boys!"

"Can't we go out?" they asked, in due succession. "Arthur's there."

"Certainly not. It might kill you."

"If the bear's alive he ought to be secured," Kelwyn said, judicially.

"Well, don't *you* try to secure him," his wife exposed him in his brave impulse. "There! Raney is chaining him to the hitching-post *now!*"

Raney was really taking this provisional measure of safety; but the bear to the spectators above showed no more signs of returning consciousness than his leader, who sat in the mud with his head fallen forward and supported under his limply hanging arms by Parthenope; while Emerance knelt before him, trying to make him drink the brandy. In despair with his failure he cast his eye upward and Kelwyn caught their reproach.

"I am certainly going down to help," Kelwyn was afterward always proud to remember now saying, and before his wife could prevent him he ran down-stairs and dropped on his knees beside Emerance. Between them they managed to get the man's mouth open and let a little brandy trickle into it. Then the bear-leader gropingly possessed himself of the bottle and tilted it to his lips. A strong shiver ran through his frame, and Parthenope divined that she might withdraw her

support. Kelwyn, having fulfilled his duty to humanity, returned to his family, and the bear-leader's first thought was of his own.

"*Ou est-ce qu'est l'ours?*" he growled, and Raney vaingloriously exhibited his passive capture.

XI

The man dragged himself painfully toward the prostrate beast, and examined him for the signs of life with hoarsely murmured laments. He put the brandy to the bear's muzzle without effect; then he sank on his heels and growled to Raney, in their language, "If there were some coffee very hot!"

Parthenope understood, and she shouted up to Mrs. Kelwyn at the window, "Light the spirit-lamp under the coffee-pot!" The zeal of saving life had penetrated to Mrs. Kelwyn also, and she obeyed the order blindly. When Parthenope came following her mandate Mrs. Kelwyn was indignant that her succor should have been invoked for the bear; but it was now too late. The girl caught the pot from the flame, and, pouring all the coffee out into a bowl, hurried below with it.

The man slipped the muzzle from the bear and pried the beast's jaws apart.

"Better let me give it him," Emerance suggested, offering to take the bowl from Parthenope. It was an odd moment for her superiority to assert itself, but this was the moment it chose.

"If you will help keep the bear's mouth open," she said, severely, "*I* will pour the coffee in," and she emptied the bowl into the red chasm, which suddenly shut like a trap. She caught her hand away with a little whoop.

"Oh, did he snap you?" the young man asked, anxiously.

"Not at all," she snubbed his anxiety. "Don't notice it."

No one else seemed to have noticed it, and the bear-leader slipped back the muzzle and, still kneeling beside the bear, waited results. The coffee wrought the miracle which the brandy had failed to work; the bear came to with a strong shudder, and rose to his hind legs with a heart-shaking roar which sent his deliverers flying. A crash of thunder followed, and the storm began again. Of the actors in the recent drama none remained on the scene but the bear and his leader. They began making for the barn again, and Mrs. Kite screamed: "Raney, tell him he mustn't go to the barn! If Mr. Kite comes home and finds that bear in the barn he'll shoot him!"

"He got to go somewhere," Raney protested, sullenly.

"Take them to the woodhouse, then."

After a hesitation of self-respect, Raney led the way with a "*Suivez-moi.*"

On the stairs the girl stopped and looked at her hand, and Emerance asked again, "Did he hurt you?"

This time she answered, more gently, "Oh no," and she laughed. "I would *do* it, you know. I was merely frightened by his jaws shutting so. But it was only mechanical."

"Oh yes; he didn't mean to bite," Emerance said; and when they went in to the Kelwyns she made haste to declare:

"I insisted on giving 'first aid' to the bear myself, and I thought he had bitten me. But he only shut his mouth mechanically." The word seemed to repeat itself mechanically, and she laughed as she had laughed before. Then, rather white and tremulous, she hurried away toward her room.

Mrs. Kelwyn ran after her, and did not come back at once. When she returned the electrical storm was passing; but the weather had settled for a steady downpour, and she said: "Of course, Mr. Emerance, you won't dream of trying to get to the Shakers' till it stops. You must stay and take supper with us, if we have any. Mrs. Kite is so uncertain—"

"And it's been a very demoralizing afternoon for everybody," Kelwyn continued for her. "But I dare say Mrs. Kite will pull herself together in time."

The young man said, "I hate to trouble you," and then he ventured, after a moment, "If Mrs. Kite is very much preoccupied, do you think she would mind my trying a few tricks with her cook-stove?" To Mrs. Kelwyn's look of uncertainty he added, "Then I could feel as if I were earning my board. I should like to get supper for you," he ended, explicitly.

Mrs. Kelwyn was seldom at a loss for a decision, but now she cast glances of misgiving at her husband. He refused the responsibility, but her boys asked in chorus, "May *we* help him to get supper, mamma?"

Emerance had not waited. The boys had followed him into the kitchen, where the Kelwyns presently heard him in amicable colloquy with Mrs. Kite. A third voice joined itself to theirs, and Kelwyn said, "Why, is that Parthenope?"

"Oh, I dare say!" his wife answered, impatiently. "She seemed quite unnerved, and I made her lie down. But I knew she would be up as soon as I left her. I suppose she went down the back way."

"Well, she wasn't very seriously wounded," Kelwyn consoled himself. "And we couldn't have allowed him to get our supper without letting *some* one help him."

"No," she consented. "Of course it's better for

Thennie to offer. But it's rather odd. I can't make him out. He seems to have been too many things—what I call a Jack of all trades."

"In this case if he's master of one," Kelwyn said, "I shall forgive him. I think I'm going to be hungry. It's turning cold, I fancy, or else the damp has got in. I believe I'll make up a trash-wood fire on the hearth and dry the place out."

He went for an armful of pine sticks, and when he came back Mrs. Kelwyn was returning from the kitchen. "I thought I ought to look in to show that I appreciated— But I didn't stay; Thennie might think I was following her up. I don't know that I liked his being in his shirt-sleeves. To be sure, with those woollen outing shirts that the young men are beginning to wear! And he's given the boys some dough, and they're as happy as kings. And Parthenope seems to be useful in spite of her scare. I think she's rather ashamed of her whole performance."

Kelwyn had laid his fire and was going to touch a match to it when her attention was directed to it, and she wished to lay it differently. In the lulls of their dispute they heard Mrs. Kite in the kitchen from time to time:

"There! Do you mean to tell *me* that *that's* what they're for? Well, I heard of gem-pans fast enough from the Shaker ladies, but I didn't think *these* were them. And will they raise just from the heat? Arthur, you keep your hands off, or I'll— Goin' to *broil* it? We always fry *ours;* I don't suppose I could get a bit of broiled steak down Mr. Kite any more than— *That* the way you make an omelet? I've heard of 'em, but I never expected to see one. And you don't let the tea stay a minute? And you got to have fresh boiled water every time? Well, no wonder I couldn't seem to

suit your folks. You mind my settin' here? If you do, just say the word, and I'll—"

Her talk came with the sounds of walking to and fro, with serious answers from Emerance and gay comments from Parthenope, with shrill, despairing resentments of the Kite boy's aggressions from the Kelwyn boys, the clash of stove-doors and stove-lids, and the hiss of broiling.

Kelwyn thought that he ought to show himself on the scene in his quality of a host courteous to his guest. But as often as he proposed this his wife forbade him on one pretext or another. At last she said: "Elmer, don't say that again! I wouldn't have Parthenope think we noticed!"

Then he said, "Oh!" A moment later the kitchen door was set officiously open by Mrs. Kite, and a procession of Parthenope and the Kelwyn boys came in bearing the firstlings of the feast; against a glare from the stove the figure of Emerance was silhouetted in the act of lifting the broiler from the clinging flames of the fat, and then he reappeared with his coat on, and between his hands the platter holding the beefsteak saved from the morning's purchase, and now serving as the chief dish at a meal that almost rose to the dignity of dinner.

Mrs. Kite followed with a heaping plate of gems. "You've got to excuse *me,* Mrs. Kelwyn, if I almost forgot your supper. But I guess you won't miss anything. I've been so anxious about *him,* out in all this rain, and I want you should save him a bite of everything, so he can see what gems and omelet are like for *once* in his life."

Mrs. Kelwyn added some graces of jam and marmalade, and olives from the store she had brought into the country for occasions of feasting, and at the end

of a meal from which her boys dropped torpid to their bed, their father philosophized the effect with himself as one of returning self-respect. His wife and her cousin were carrying the remnants out to Mrs. Kite in the kitchen, forbidding help from the men whom they left sitting each at a corner of the hearth.

"It is odd," Kelwyn explained, "but it is true that under the regimen of Mrs. Kite I've had the sense of sinking lower and lower in my own opinion. I haven't been able to recognize myself as a gentleman. You understand?"

"I get your drift," the younger man said, with a smile of interest which brightened into speculation. "I wonder how much of what we call our personal dignity is really impersonal."

"How do you mean?"

"How much is safeguarded from without, how much from within? Whether we are still in the bondage of the old superstition that the things which defile a man are those which happen *to* him rather than those which happen *from* him?"

It would not do for a lecturer on historical sociology to seem to himself at a loss on a point like that, and Kelwyn asked, in his turn, "Hasn't it always been so?"

"Yes; or else I suppose we shouldn't have been instructed against it. As yet I don't believe there's much personal dignity in the world. It's impersonal, what there is of it. Why, for instance," he pursued, "should you have felt degraded by the bad housekeeping of this woman, and especially her bad cooking? Or wasn't it that, concretely, that you meant?"

Kelwyn reflected, and he owned from his conscience: "Yes, I fancy that's just what I meant. And in the light you put it in it is rather droll. There seems to

have been some force in the environment that vulgarized—that surrounded me with the social atmosphere of a mechanics' boarding-house. There have been times when I rose from Mrs. Kite's table—I can't call it ours—with the feeling that I was not fit for society—that I ought to resign my position in the university."

He exaggerated, smiling and inviting Emerance to smile; but the young man smiled only indirectly, and he said, with apparent irrelevance, "I have heard a few of your lectures."

This was something still further restorative; Kelwyn felt that he was getting securely back to his level. "Ah!" he prompted, hoping for praise, but decently wishing that he did not.

"Yes," the young man responded, "I have been interested in the subject." He dismissed that aspect of it. "But I don't think environment is quite the name for the thing. If you put people who are used to simpler things than yourself in your place here, would they be humiliated by the environment?"

"Yes, I think they would, if they were people of any refinement at all," Kelwyn had a sense of generous democracy in urging.

"They might be people of another kind of refinement. They might not feel the woman's shiftlessness as much as you, and yet be grieved for her by it."

"I believe," Kelwyn said, "we have always tried to consider her."

"I've expressed myself badly if I've suggested otherwise," the young man returned, with gravity. "I'm trying to imagine the sort of religious—it isn't the word—spiritual culture which seems to have pretty well gone out of the world, if it was ever much in it, and which once considered the uncultivated on their own ground and not on that of their superiors. I'm not sure—yet

—that this sort of culture didn't implicate a certain amount of sentimentality. I should like to ask your opinion."

"Yes," Kelwyn said, after taking a moment for thought, "I should think it did. And I suppose we should agree that sentimentality is always to be avoided."

"Why, I'm not sure—yet," the young man surprised him by answering.

"Then I don't know that I follow you."

"I suppose what I am driving at is this—or something like this: as long as we are in the keeping of our customary circumstances, the thing which we call environment and by which we always understand the personal environment, whether we recognize the fact or not, has very little influence on our character. If you had had these people serving you in your house at home you would not have felt degraded by the manner or make of their service?—For that's what it comes to here."

"No, I suppose we shouldn't. That is— I should like to give the point further reflection."

"The personal environment would be the same in both cases. But in one case you could keep your own level in spite of it, and in the other case you feel degraded by it. So the real agency would be in the circumstances, wouldn't it? The conditions?"

"It's an interesting point," Kelwyn allowed.

"Perhaps I can put it in another way," Emerance resumed. "If we had all been at a picnic together, and I had offered to be your cook, as I did when I proposed going into Mrs. Kite's kitchen and getting your supper just now, we should have been remanded in common to the Golden Age, or at least to the Homeric epoch, and you would have found it poetic, primitive,

delightful. But here we were not remanded to a period sufficiently remote—at least I wasn't. I only got back so far as the era of the sons of the farm-houses who have served you in the kitchen and helped wait on you at table, and it gave you a little start when I sat down with you."

"You have no right to say that—"

"But isn't it true?" The young man laughed, and rose briskly and went to the window and looked out. "Starlight!" he exclaimed. "I must be going!"

"But surely," Kelwyn began, rising in protest, "we hoped you would stay the night—Mrs. Kelwyn will wish— It will be late for you at the Shakers', and that bit of road through the woods—you won't be able to see your way."

"I shall get to the Shakers' in time for people who never lock their doors; and the stretch of black road through the woods will add a strain of mystery to my experience; I shall have the weird pleasure of feeling my way." He added, musingly: "I imagine that the animals that prowl by night feel their way much oftener than they see it. I shall be remanded to my animal instincts. You would call it degraded?" He looked at Kelwyn with the eyes of a poet rather than a sociologist, but he broke abruptly from his question. "Good-night. Please say good-night for me to the—"

"But you mustn't go without— Let me call them!"

"No, no! Don't!"

Before Kelwyn could hinder, Emerance had found his hat and was gone.

XII

When Mrs. Kelwyn and Parthenope came in from the kitchen, "Where is Mr. Emerance?" the elder woman asked with her tongue and the younger with her eyes.

"He has just gone; he insisted on going—he wouldn't let me call you."

"Well!" Mrs. Kelwyn said, and Parthenope said nothing. "Didn't you ask him to stay? I expected him to stay!"

"Of course. But he was quite determined."

"Very strange!" Mrs. Kelwyn was as silent for a while as Parthenope. Then she sighed with relief. "Perhaps it is just as well. He is a strange being. Only we oughtn't to seem ungrateful."

"I have been trying with all my might not to seem ungrateful," Kelwyn retorted, in exasperation with the burden he felt unjustly cast upon him. "If you had been here you would have thought him still stranger."

"What do you mean?"

"We have had a sociological inquiry."

"Nonsense, Elmer!"

"That is what I thought it amounted to."

"What was it?" she pursued him, and he repeated their talk in its essentials.

Mrs. Kelwyn listened in mounting disapproval. But at the end she did not express her censure directly. It was Parthenope who said: "I think that was rather snobbish."

Kelwyn said, "I don't think it was snobbish exactly."

"If he was ashamed of what he had done it was snobbish," she insisted.

"People," Mrs. Kelwyn generalized, "who have risen above their origin are apt to be sensitive about such things. We can't wonder at that."

"No," Kelwyn assented, so remote from his own origin that he did not wince. His mother had done her own work, and his father used to build the kitchen fire for her before he went down and swept out his store. "But I shouldn't say he was a snob, exactly. If you speculate about such intimate things you are in danger of being misunderstood. But I thought his inquiry was rather interesting. I thought there was something in what he said."

"You are always so open-minded, Elmer," his wife applauded. "That, I think, is your greatest trait. It's what gives you your influence."

"I like to be fair," he so far accepted her praise.

"There is such a thing as being *too* fair," Parthenope said, with scorn. "Don't waste your fairness on Mr. Emerance, Cousin Elmer. He thought we would despise him for cooking our supper, and he was meanly writhing through his philosophy. Was he despising *us,* I wonder, for cleaning up the dishes after him?"

"He would feel it was different with women," Kelwyn was beginning, but she cut in with the demand:

"Because women are naturally servile?"

"Because they are naturally domestic. But what he said really interested me. It seemed a survival of the sort of question that vexed Emerson and Lowell in their turn."

"But I don't think Emerson and Lowell would have shown that they were ashamed of getting supper," the girl retorted.

"They were perplexed by their relation to those who got it for them," Kelwyn insisted.

"Well, good-night, Cousin Elmer. Cousin Carry, good-night. I believe I'm going to bed."

Kelwyn looked at his wife. "Isn't this rather a strange turn that Parthenope is taking?"

"I don't know. Of course she is a little disappointed at his not waiting for her to come back."

Kelwyn's look deepened into a stare. Husbands live all their lives with their wives, and do not learn the difference between men and women in the most elementary things. "Can you make out who or what he is? Did he drop any hint about himself? Did he give you any clew?"

"I didn't ask for any. He had told us all I know. He seems to have been a teacher in the public schools and a pupil in the cooking-schools. We've had practical proof of his gifts in one way, and he has tried to show himself a social philosopher with me. I must say his omelets are good, whatever his ideas are."

Mrs. Kelwyn said, with apparent irrelevance: "You can see that her curiosity is piqued by him. That's what made her so severe. Is he going to stay long with the Shakers?"

"Really, I don't know. It appears that they have no room for him, from what you have told me. And I don't understand that they have any work."

"They would let him stay somehow. You know they never turn anybody away. It would be simply impossible to let him come here. And I am very glad he didn't stay the night." After a while she resumed, briefly: "I've been afraid that the intimacy was ad-

vancing faster than the acquaintance would bear. It was very intimate, their getting the supper together, that way; it was domestic. And now, her condemning him so harshly! I don't like that. Yes, I'm glad he's gone."

The stars of the summer sky twinkled in the pools of the road and glinted from the dripping foliage of the wayside bushes. As Emerance kept on toward the blackness of the woods, the wagon-track lost its distinctness and dwindled into two parallel ruts which the grass overhung the more densely from the drenching of the recent rain. Before he entered the shadow his shoes were soaked through, but the moisture gave him a pleasure, and he exulted in the rich solitude and gloom. Presently he was aware of not being alone. There was a damp smell of horses and the sound of their long, sighing breath, and then there was a burst of blasphemy from a man who was apparently swearing to himself.

"Hello, there! Where you goin'? You'll be right bunt into my hossis, fust thing you know!"

Emerance stopped and retorted, "What are you doing here with your horses, anyway, in the middle of the road?"

The cursing voice responded: "Where'd you want me to be with my hossis? Something's broke 'th my wagon. Got a match?"

"No, I haven't," Emerance said. "But can't I help you somehow?"

"I don't know how you can." The wet crunching of heavy boots advanced toward Emerance, and a figure larger than life in the dim luminosity hulked over him. "If I had a match or something! Do you know where we are?"

"Not far from the edge of the woods. I've just got into it."

"Well, but where else are we?"

"About half a mile from the Shakers' South Family House."

"Oh! You come from there?"

"Yes; I'm on my way to the Office to sleep."

"I guess *I'm* goin' to sleep here in the woods, for all I can make out," the hulking figure said, disconsolately. "No use to feel," the vague giant added. "If feelin' could ha' done it I'd ha' b'en home an hour ago."

"Are you Mr. Kite?" Emerance asked, not desisting from his tactile examination of the case as he went and came round the team.

"My name's Kite."

"Well, what seems to be the matter?"

"*You* tell."

"Why don't you drive home?"

"Can't start the hossis."

"Balk?"

"No! Never!"

They both stood still.

"I'll go back for a lantern," Emerance said. "Or, wait a moment." He poked in among the horses' heels, and rattled at the trace-chains and swingletrees, where the brutes patiently suffered him. "Whoa! Hold on! Yes! Just what I thought. You've backed up and caught this off horse's swingletree into the wheel and locked it, somehow, so it can't move."

"Well!" Kite stupidly commented. "I thought something was wrong there, but I couldn't see a mite, and—"

He had recovered his courage, and he now resumed command of the situation. He called to his horses,

"Hen-ep!" but after a forward strain they stood still in their tracks. The ingenious accident had not happened without due intricacy.

"Hold on!" Emerance called to him. "I didn't say I'd got it free yet. It's caught so that I can't loosen it unless you can get me something to see by, and even then—"

"Look here!" Kite said, lunging back to him, with a sound as of cattle breaking through underbrush. "If us two can't pull it loose I'm goin' to untackle the hossis and leave the wagon here till mornin'. Ain't nobody goin' to run off with it, the wheel locked that way."

"Might be a good idea," Emerance consented, and after they had vainly tugged at the swingletree together it came to that end. Kite untackled his horses and got them by the bridles. "Livin' about here?" he asked, as a preliminary to parting with Emerance.

"I'm staying with the Shakers for a few days. I thought I might get some sort of farm work. But they've got nothing for me to do."

"Used to farm work?"

"I was brought up to it."

"You don't sound like it."

"Oh, I've taught school a good while."

"I don't see," Kite said, sulkily, rather to himself than Emerance, "how they s'pose I'm goin' to get that piece of English grass cut." He made a start, calling over his shoulder to Emerance for good-night, "Well, so long!"

"Better let me help you."

"I guess I can manage my hossis alone," Kite answered, haughtily.

"I meant the English grass."

"Oh! Well. Why, what the— This hoss is lame!"

Emerance came forward out of the blacker darkness to the horses' heads.

"I'll go back with you and we'll look him over in the barn. I can get into the Shakers' any time; perhaps you'll give me a shake-down in your haymow."

If the offer of help had been for anything but his horse Kite might have refused it, but as it was he neither consented nor refused. He merely said, letting Emerance take the bridle of the sound horse: "He's a funny devil. Don't mind if he tries to nip you. He don't mean nothing by it, but you want to look out."

They went along over the way Emerance had come, splashing through the miry ruts and brushing the wet from the wayside bushes. As they came in front of the Family house, Parthenope had just blown her lamp out and was debating with herself how much of her window she should put down and how much leave up, in precaution against its growing hotter or colder toward morning, when she heard a noise as of the snorting and plunging of horses, with the rattling of chains, and the leathern creaking of harness. Then she heard a voice which she knew for Kite's saying, "You just ketch a-hold of this other feller a minute, and I'll git my lantern here in the woodhouse."

A voice which she knew for Emerance's answered, "Look out; there's a bear in there!"

"A bear? What's a bear doin' in my woodhouse?"

She heard Emerance explaining and Kite threatening to have the bear and his leader out of that, he did not care what happened, and then Emerance protesting, and at last the tinkling note of Mrs. Kite calling, as from an open doorway: "Here's your lantern, Alvin; I got it out for you. Where *have* you been? I kep'

supper for you; but it's pretty cold now, I guess, or it will be by the time you get through with your hossis. That Raney there with you?"

"No, it's a feller that helped me with the hossis, back here in the woods a piece. He's goin' to sleep in the barn; I want you should bring him out something to eat."

"All right," Mrs. Kite answered back. "But you want to be careful who you let sleep in the barn, Alvin. Does he smoke?"

"No, I don't smoke, Mrs. Kite. And I'm not hungry. I shall do very well."

"Why, that you, Mr. Emerance?"

"Quiet! Whoa! Whoa! These horses smell the bear. Take hold of his head, Mrs. Kite! Whoa there! Back up!"

The red blot of a lantern came wavering from the door below, and, dipping and jerking through the dark, indicated the progress of Mrs. Kite toward the place where the horses made their terror heard.

A vague envy pierced Parthenope's heart. She dropped on her knees at the window and put her head out to see all that she could of the drama which was more audible than visible. She would have liked to be there in Mrs. Kite's place, holding the lantern and helping the men. She wanted to call, "Wait for me, Mrs. Kite; I'm coming!" and she wanted to do this so much that it seemed to her as if she had done it. But she knew she had not, and after a cry from Mrs. Kite, "He's got away!" and her husband's blast of curses and the rush of a clashing and snorting horse, with the pursuit of a man who must have been Emerance from his distant call, "It's all right; I've got him," she did nothing bolder than put her head farther out of the window and try to see better. But she could only hear

Emerance coming back with the horse and then his renewed struggle in getting him past the woodhouse; Kite must have already got by with the other horse, for his swearing sounded farther off, in the direction of the barn.

The struggle of the man and the brute ended in the man's triumph; the red blot of the lantern followed with Mrs. Kite toward the barn. It was a long time before it came flickering back, but Parthenope could have waited till morning. She heard voices lifted, the voice of Kite saying, "Well, don't oversleep yourself," and the voice of Mrs. Kite calling, "Well, we'll have breakfast at five o'clock," and then she realized that Emerance was going to sleep in the barn. It was not the hardship of it, but the shame of it that made her wish to shake her kindred from their sleep and shock them into the hospitality they ought to offer from their superfluity of shelter in the great empty Family house; and when the Kites had got back within eavesdropping at their door under her window she caught certain generalities from them which she could not help knowing had a particular bearing on the case.

"I hated to leave him out there," Mrs. Kite said, "but there wa'n't a place where I could think to put him; I'd have made Arthur get in with me, but the child's bed wouldn't have been big enough, and Albert and Raney have only got one between them. I shouldn't mind the bats, but the rats runnin' all over him! Well, some folks don't seem to care for any one else."

"No," Kite agreed. "Want you to slave your life out for 'em, but when it comes to doin' for anybody else, they got both hoofs in the troth every time."

"He's full as well educated as they be. He talks as correct."

"I don't care about the talkin'. It's the doin' I look

at. He stood by like a major. Hadn't been for him, I guess I should ha' slep' in the woods to-night, let alone the barn. Well, it takes all kinds to make a world. One thing, I'm glad I ain't *their* kind."

"We should ha' had to call 'em up out of their sleep," Mrs. Kite tittered.

"Should we ha' minded bein' called out of *our* sleep?"

"No; but then *we* don't bange round all day!"

"That's about the size of it, I guess. If we'd wore ourselves out findin' fault, we'd want our rest."

The Kites shut themselves in with the comfort of their opinions, and Parthenope heard no more. She left that question of how much window she should keep open, and crept into bed and tried to think of what could be said in defence of the Kelwyns. She loved her cousin, and in spite of what she felt to be the crude justice of the case against her she was indignantly loyal to her, and the more so because she knew that she and not Kelwyn was chiefly at fault. But had not they both treated Emerance as they would not have treated one whose place in the world they were surer of? Had not she herself been a little too topping in some particulars of consciousness? She did not abate even in her actual humiliation all sense of that superiority which she felt toward people she did not exactly understand; and undoubtedly she did not understand this very anomalous Mr. Emerance. But she could have wished at last that she had not insisted on giving the bear coffee herself; and in the one-sided colloquy she now held with Mr. Emerance she at once confessed that she had been very headstrong, and made him say that he had not thought of her action as an instance of obstinacy but rather of admirable courage. She wished that she had the courage to knock at Mrs. Kelwyn's

door and tell her that Mr. Emerance was going to sleep in the barn; but this, for more reasons than one, would have taken more courage than she had. It seemed to her that she should never get to sleep, but there are few moral causes that can keep youth awake the whole night, and Parthenope slept long before morning.

The hay in the barn was the last year's hay, and Emerance's bed was not so sweet as it was soft. But it was not the first time he had slept on old hay in a barn; he had dreamed Fourths of July in when he was a boy on such a bed, and sometimes when he was an older boy, coming home from a dance later than he wished his father to know, he had crept into the mow over the stall where he had bedded his horse, and got a full night's rest between three o'clock and six of the morning. His reminiscences did not so perfume the hay but its mustiness was too much for him till he turned on his back and faced the roof, where the stars looked back at him through the crevices of the old shingles. He suspected that the small chirpings and squeakings from the rafters were the vigils of bats, but they were as possibly the somnambulic notes of swallows; and the logic of the situation was that he would be fast asleep before the rats would leave the oats in the bins of the horses below and begin their question of him in his loft.

He wondered if the Shakers would let him help Kite cut that piece of English grass. He did not wish to stay with them unless he could be of use; but he wished to stay with them, if indeed it was they with whom he wished to stay. The horses champed their oats, and pounded the floor with their hoofs, and heaved deep sighs of comfort. As if with no interval, he heard a loud clamor of cocks and a shouting of robins, and a fabric of joyous sound seemed risen from the earth

to the sky where now the sun and not the stars shone down through the roof.

When the Kelwyns gathered for their eight-o'clock breakfast, and Mrs. Kite had left their coffee on the table, she smoothly reappeared with a plate of gems in her hand.

"Mr. Emerance made 'em, and he thought you would like a pan, and I been trying to keep 'em warm; but it's so late that I don't know as I have, exactly."

At the fact unfolded, bit by bit, from Parthenope's admissions, Kelwyn showed a helpless regret; but Mrs. Kelwyn defended herself. "It can't be helped now. But you ought to have insisted upon his staying, Elmer. Then nothing of all this would have happened."

In the late evening Kite came home alone from the English meadow. The Kelwyns heard him telling his wife that Mr. Emerance had gone to the Shakers' for the night, and they felt a rise of self-respect in the fact that he was not going to sleep another night in the barn. They were able to convict him of a certain want of consideration for them in having slept there at all. But the next morning, when Kelwyn went over to the Shakers' for his mail, he brought back word that Emerance had left by an early train; the Office Sisters thought, for Boston. Kelwyn was somehow crestfallen at the fact, and they all went rather dully through the day.

XIII

For Parthenope the unexpected drama of her first afternoon seemed far removed in time. The woodhouse stood open and empty, as if consciously showing the absence of the bear and his leader, whom Mrs. Kite reported seeing make off toward the woods in the morning after when she got up to kindle the kitchen fire. Only one thing happened in the interval now following to divert the girl's thoughts from their centripetal tendency; and the excitement of this she shared with the whole household. It was the disappearance of a series of Mrs. Kite's pies from the hanging-shelf in the cellar where she had put them on Saturday night with her own hands duly numbered. Day after day, pie after pie, they disappeared for nearly a week, and then ceased to disappear. The fact would have suggested tramps; but the cellar doors remained locked, and Kelwyn contended that though a succession of tramps might steal pies of Mrs. Kite's make not the same tramp or tramps would continue to steal them. The hypothesis of rats was untenable because of the height of the shelf, but in view of the fact that there is nothing rats cannot do, it was decided that the pies had been taken by rats. When the pies were no longer taken the hypothesis of rats was rejected, and then the excitement passed into a lulling sense of mystery.

Kelwyn wrote at his lectures all the morning, and Mrs. Kelwyn worked at her mending in the afternoon. The girl took long rambles with the Kelwyn

boys through the woods and over the fields, when they would rather have been about the mischief in which the Kite boy abounded; but they submitted to her companionship, and the Kite boy made his excursions on the old white horse alone. He had found pasturage for him in a wood-lot which he made believe his mother had given to him for that use, and in the horse's toothless incapacity for grazing he had fed him with soft mushes when he could filch the cornmeal for them and escape with them from the kitchen door. He had a hardy contempt for such pleasures as strawberrying in the meadow, where the grass crept thinly up into the shelter of the pines, and where, over the mat of the fallen needles, the vines hung their crimson berries in clusters like chimes of fairy bells. The possibility of chipmunks and woodchucks reconciled him somewhat more to blueberrying in the burnt lands, which the forest fires had left charred, but which a dense growth of bushes had almost consoled for their blight, between the Family house and the pond in the chestnut woods; when Francy Kelwyn sprang shrieking from a clump of blueberry bushes, with the blood streaming from a dozen punctures in his smooth-shorn head, where a swarm of yellow-jackets had stung him, the Kite boy seemed to feel that his sacrifice had met some recognition, and he joyously invited the sufferer to remain with him and fight the enemy.

Mrs. Kelwyn lived in an unremitting anxiety concerning him. He was the confidant of nature in the most occult intimacies of animal life; he assisted with the same zeal at the births and deaths of the barn-yard; and Mrs. Kelwyn, who kept her boys as well as she could from sharing his bolder knowledge, could not always prevent them from claiming the previous acquaintance of the pork and veal and poultry which

came to the table. She felt him to be a dangerous part of the hardships which she and her family endured in the keeping of his, and as noxious to her children's morals as his mother to their digestions.

Mrs. Kite had quite lapsed from the ideal which she had imagined from Emerance's example, and was the worse for her efforts to remember the things she imagined from it. Yet, if she had not been a wonder of such satisfied inefficiency, certain qualities of hers might have won upon the tolerance if not the liking of the Kelwyns; preposterous as it was, she sometimes affected them as a lady, or as a conditional entity which would have evolved in time into some ornamental type rather than another. Her cooking could be ignored in the supplies of canned foods and of baker's bread from the village grocery, and now and then it was ameliorated by Parthenope's visits to the kitchen, which Mrs. Kite suffered with placid indifference and Mrs. Kelwyn permitted with protests against the violation of principle involved. For the girl they were tinged with pensive associations from the gay afternoon and evening when she had been the handmaid of Emerance in the preparation of the picnic feasts of the memorable day which had ended in such inconclusion.

The week she had meant to spend with her cousins passed, but at a little urgence she stayed on. She could not exactly say that she had come to them merely for a fresh point of view; that would have been rather ungracious; but she said that she had been wondering whether it might not be better for her aunt's health, and usefuler for her own art, to go to Europe for the summer, and spend the winter there. She wished to talk the matter over with the Kelwyns; for the present, however, they all put it by.

XIV

The fame of Parthenope's coffee-making had spread from Mrs. Kite to the Shakers, and one afternoon some of the Sisters came, at Mrs. Kelwyn's invitation, to see the girl make it and to drink it when it was made. Coffee, in their ethics, was not quite a sin; it was more like a venial excess; if now and then it must be permitted, as in their experience it was, then they might be partially redeemed from error if the coffee were very good. They clustered, dovelike in their soft drab, around the table where Parthenope watched the machine, and admired her beauty and grace and fashion in muted asides to Mrs. Kelwyn. When the smoking coffee spilled from the spout they broke into subdued cries of wonder, and when the girl filled their cups with it, one after another, and soothed its sparkle from the bottle of cream which they had brought with them for a present, they felt sure that such coffee as that could not hurt anybody; Sister Saranna said so, and they all said so.

They each took more than one cup, in the difficulty of making the coffee and the Peake & Frean wafers, with which their hostess surprised them, come out evenly together; and they stayed nearly the whole afternoon talking. In the security of their distance from the ground-floor ell, where the Kites lived, they talked of the Kites, and so justly and kindly that Mrs. Kelwyn could join them in the justice if not the kindness.

Sister Saranna talked the most because the others

deferred, and not because she wished. She owned that she had never wanted Brother Jasper to keep the Kites after he had tried in vain to make them prepare for their guests; but there did not seem to be any one else. "Jasper was two weeks trying to get him to put up shelves for you in the milk-room instead of the cellar, where the dust from the beams used to speckle the cream so."

"*Used!*" Mrs. Kelwyn exclaimed. "Why, it does so yet!"

"I want to know!" Saranna lamented. "And the butter?"

"Worse than ever. The last churning she let stand three days without working it, and it was so rancid that we could not eat it and had to get some from the village."

Saranna was dumb. "I'm 'most afraid," she murmured, at last, "to ask anything about the beds."

"We have attended to those ourselves, Sister Saranna," Mrs. Kelwyn returned, with patience that she felt the sister ought to feel was saintly. "I *cannot* understand these people; and I hardly dare have Mr. Kelwyn speak to the man any more, he swears so, and he thinks that every complaint we make is an imputation on his wife's character. He considers her perfect, and she's just as devoted to him. Of course I like that in them, but their standing by each other doesn't help us at all; it makes the situation worse, if anything. Don't they *wish* to please us?"

"Why, she was quite proud at the idea of having you come, and of getting the Family house to live in after you go in the fall. I can't make it out any more than you. But sometimes I think we ain't quite fair to expect all women to be good housekeepers. Some of them are born to it and some ain't, any more

than men to the same trade, and they can't seem to learn because they don't take any interest. Don't you think she's got pretty manners?"

"Beautiful!" Mrs. Kelwyn conceded, in some excess, secure of her other grounds against Mrs. Kite. "She has almost the manners of a lady; she has repose."

"Too much," one of the younger Sisters ventured, and the rest tittered helplessly.

"Well, we must see what can be done," Saranna ended the matter, and this gave Mrs. Kelwyn the courage which the good-will of the Shakers always gave her. When the Sisters were gone she and Parthenope talked them over, and agreed that no behavior they had seen in the world outside was so charming as theirs.

Mrs. Kelwyn could not formulate their joint sense of it; but she accepted the notion of Parthenope, who asked: "Don't you think it must be their sincerity? I kept noticing, all the time, how they could express every shade of politeness in the simplest way without any of our compliments, and how they could make *Nay* sound as sweet and kind as *Yee*. I suppose they mean Yea."

"Yes; I noticed it, too," Mrs. Kelwyn sighed, "and when I could forget the Kites I enjoyed it. How those wretched Kites spoil everything! They're as much a blight on the society of the Shakers as they are on the weather or the scenery. I don't suppose," she lamented, "that people who enjoy nice natural things, as Mr. Kelwyn and I do, were ever so baffled. When I can get the Kites out of my mind I'm radiantly happy."

She expressed the idea of her radiant happiness in a wail that made the girl turn away her face. It would

have been cruel to laugh at her cousin; and she felt the pity of her case the more when Mrs. Kelwyn owned: "The day I got your letter saying you were coming, I tried to make Mr. Kelwyn stop you; I was ashamed to have you find us in this squalor; but if you hadn't come I don't know what I should have done. You may be sure, Thennie, I appreciate your staying on."

The example of the Shakers' sincerity had so far wrought with the girl that she felt she must say, "Yes, but you know I oughtn't to impose on your good nature."

"Oh, impose!"

"I mean," Parthenope added, more honestly, "Aunt Julia will be expecting me back any day, now. She'll want to be getting off to Pigeon Cove, and she'll need my help."

"Oh, *don't* go!" Mrs. Kelwyn entreated, with sudden tears. "I can't let you—yet! I'll write to Aunt Julia—"

"No! That wouldn't do. But *I* will write, Cousin Carry; and she'll let me stay, I know, till you're more settled." They kissed each other, and her burst of tears was such relief to Mrs. Kelwyn, and Mrs. Kite had so far mastered the art of toasting the baker's bread without charring it, and had by such a happy chance brought hot water for steeping the tea on the table, that, with their chipped beef and their potted jam, the Kelwyn family were able to sup in self-respect verging on pride. Their mother put the boys to bed in a cheerfulness they could not share, and when they had said their prayers after her she left Parthenope to sit with them and keep the dark off till they fell asleep.

She was still more heartened before she slept by something Kelwyn had forgotten to tell her, though

she was indignant with him for forgetting when he did tell her.

"I saw Brother Jasper to-day, and he's found a family to put in the place of the Kites."

"He *has*?" A note of joy came into Mrs. Kelwyn's voice.

"Yes. The man has been in the Shakers' employ and the woman is an excellent cook. Should you want to go away if they come?"

"That certainly puts a different face on the matter. But are you sure they will come?"

"The Shakers are to let me know to-morrow. Then they will arrange with the Kites."

"I feel sorry for them," Mrs. Kelwyn said, with dutiful compunction.

"Oh, so do I. But I feel sorry for myself and my family, too," he said.

"It isn't," she reflected, "as if they had tried to do better. They really don't seem to want to. And, as you say, we ought to consider ourselves."

"Did I say that?"

"You the same as said it."

Kelwyn hoped that somehow he had not, but he did not insist.

XV

One afternoon, a few days later, Elder Nathaniel came with a bunch of sturdy flowers in his hand—cox-comb, and prince's-feather, and balsam, and four-o'clock, and marigold. "For the young woman," he said, gravely, when Kelwyn, whom he found lying on the grass under the elms, rose to greet him.

"For my cousin? She is out with the children somewhere."

"Yee. You can give them to her later."

"Well, then, take a stretch of turf," Kelwyn said, and the two lay down together on the grass. It was becoming a habit of theirs when Elder Nathaniel called for a half-hour of the philosophic converse he loved. "The Sisters were much pleased with their visit." He turned his delicate aquiline profile toward Kelwyn. "The coffee was pretty strong, I guess."

"Miss Brook does make it rather strong. Were they excited?"

"They were still talking—a little. Friend Kelwyn, we are all much concerned that you are not more comfortable here. I did not think when I mentioned this house to you in the spring that it would be so bad."

"Why, it might be worse," Kelwyn said, by way of owning that it might be much better.

"We all tell Jasper that he did not use the best judgment in putting Friend Kite and his wife in to care for you, but he says he used the best judgment he had at the time. He is making careful inquiries about

the people he has found to replace them, and as soon as he is satisfied we will make the change."

Kelwyn waited a moment before he said: "I don't feel quite easy about putting the Kites out. They are not fit to stay, of course, and there isn't a day when they keep their agreement fully. They don't know how; apparently they don't want to. Sometimes we think they want to force *us* out."

"Nay, we couldn't allow that," Elder Nathaniel protested.

"It all seemed very simple in prospect," Kelwyn went on. "We had only to say, 'You don't do and you must go.'"

"Yee?" the Elder prompted.

"Of course we expected that it could be arranged so that they should lose nothing—"

"That could be arranged."

"But that doesn't seem so conclusive or inclusive as it did in prospect. There is something besides their interest to be considered. Their natural pride is to be considered, their unnatural self-respect—for they have no reason to respect themselves in their failure with us—and their real disgrace before the community if we should turn them out."

"Yee," Elder Nathaniel gently acquiesced. He added, sadly, "Life is not very logical, Friend Kelwyn."

"No, or else its logic is in the consequences, not in the actions. Of course, consequences flow from causes, but the actions that relate the consequences to the causes often seem to be of a quality quite different from either."

"Yee; but it is in them that our individual responsibility lies. We have nothing to do with causes or consequences. They seem to belong to God."

Kelwyn smiled. "Well, that is why I feel slow to act, even in such a simple case as turning these miserable people out of a house where they have forfeited all right to remain. At any rate, I shall want to know fully about the couple that Brother Jasper proposes to put in their place."

Elder Nathaniel forbore to recognize the inconsequence, if he saw it, which Kelwyn's decision implied. He only said: "He is asking about them. *We* don't want to make another mistake, either," and then he said, with no apparent sense of relevance, "Friend Emerance has come back."

"Emerance has come back!" Kelwyn echoed, with a joyousness which he could have proved no more logical than some other things in life. "When?"

"By the early train this morning. He walked up from the depot before breakfast."

"Is he going to stay with you?"

"Nay; I don't know that. There is nothing for him to do, and we have no room for permanent guests in the Office. And Friend Emerance does not give us the hope that he will ever be gathered in."

"I shall be very glad to see him again," Kelwyn said, ignoring the fact which Elder Nathaniel had owned with a sigh. He tried to continue the conversation on the impersonal, the psychological, the sociological terms, but it would not do. Probably Elder Nathaniel felt his inattention, of which Kelwyn himself was hardly aware, for presently he sat up on the grass, and presently he went away, as Kelwyn suspected, with an obscure pang, sooner than he had meant to go. He watched the Shaker's quaint bowed figure down the road, and then he went in-doors to his wife, whose name he called before him, as if impatient to speak with her.

Parthenope, with the two boys, had wandered another way, and found herself going in the direction of a little roadside school-house which she had already noticed in her rambles. When they came up to it she saw some wagons and buggies hitched to the nearest trees and fence-posts, and she was sensible of some unwonted commotion in the simple place. As she hesitated before the door she heard voices unlike those of the routine recitations, and she saw the room fairly filled with people in hats and bonnets who were clearly visitors. A pretty girl of her own age, with locks matching the gold fillings in her teeth which showed when she smiled sweetly upon Parthenope, came to the door.

"Won't you come in?" she said. "We're having our examinations for the end of the term, and the School Committee are conducting them just now. I'm the teacher. I should be much pleased to have you come in."

She spoke with a little stiffness in her dignity which Parthenope found charming, and, after looking round at the eager faces of the boys, she said, "Oh, thank you," and went in toward the seats against the wall to which the teacher led her.

"We are pretty nearly through with the examinations," the teacher whispered, "and we are going to have a little scene—I don't know what to call it exactly—something that the boys are going to represent. The young lady who is examining the children now is the first lady we have ever had elected on the School Committee here, and we think she's splendid."

The teacher nodded sweetly to Parthenope, and went forward to the platform where the school committee-girl sat with two committee-men, and took her place beside her. Parthenope thought them interesting con-

trasts—the pretty teacher, slender and erect and smiling on all with birdlike turns of her little head, and the committee-girl, to whom she seemed willingly subordinated, with close-cropped hair and a large-buttoned, loose jacket, wanting only the bifurcation of her plain skirt to seem a square-shouldered, short young man. She had a quick, useful, businesslike face, and she put with such force and distinctness the questions she had to ask in geography and arithmetic as to bring out what was best in the twenty-five or thirty children, mostly boys, answering from their regulation public-school desks, or working out the sums set them on the breadth of black-painted wall at the end of the room.

The place was garlanded with ground-pine caught up with knots and branches of the pink and white laurel still billowing the woods with their bloom. In the brief intermission which now followed the visitors talked together in low tones, and admired the decorations till the teacher rapped authoritatively upon her desk and said, "The scene we are going to have is out of the tragedy of *Rollo*. I don't know as you've ever read it," the teacher added, in a low murmur, to Parthenope, to whom she seemed to attach herself in a special hospitality, perhaps because they were both girls, and both young. "Well, I don't know as I've read it all myself," she hurried on, cutting herself short as two of the larger boys came out on the platform from some room behind it, and in their imagined costumes of ancient Peruvian and mediæval Castilian began their dialogue.

"*Inform me, friend, is Alonso, the Peruvian, confined in this dungeon?*"

"*He is.*"

"*What is his fate?*"

"*He dies at sunrise.*"

They went on with the passages which school-boys for a hundred years have recited upon like occasions, and then, with awkward bows to their audience, bumped one another out of the door by which they had entered.

The teacher rose and said, "If any of the friends would like to offer remarks, we should be pleased to have them."

For a while no one stirred in response. Then, with a slight, nervous clearing of the throat, Emerance got to his feet in the place where Parthenope had all the time been subliminally aware he was sitting. She thought his thin, conscientious face, narrowing from the cheek-bones to the chin, which he fingered with the gesture somehow very familiar to her, was beautiful, and his figure, supported by one hand on the top of the chair before him, had grace in spite of its lean angularity.

"I should like," he said, abruptly, "to have those boys come back a moment."

"Why, certainly," the teacher answered, in a tone not so acquiescent as her words. She looked at the committee-girl as if referring the matter to her, and at a nod from her she went to the door and returned with the Peruvian and the Castilian, hurriedly rehabilitated as to their costume and clearly much mystified.

"Now, boys," Emerance briskly accosted them, "you did that scene very well, in the way it has always been done. You had your parts perfectly, and you conveyed the sense. But now I want you to think how you would have spoken and acted if you had really been the friend of a man who was going to be put to death to-morrow morning, and the guard of his prison, who respected and pitied him. Then I want you to do it just as you feel it. Do you think you can?"

"I don't believe we can," the friend of Alonso confessed.

"Nobody could do it that way," the Spanish sentinel was sure.

"Well, let's try," Emerance persisted. "Just do it as you think two boys would do it."

"Boys wouldn't talk that way," one of them said. "If a fellow was to say, 'Inform me, friend,' the rest would say he was a fool."

The other boy explained, "It's poetry; or, anyway, elocution."

"Oh, it's elocution, I know. I'm not sure it's poetry," Emerance said. "But try it in the prose that boys talk."

The boys grinned and looked at the teacher, who referred their glance to the committee-girl. She said: "I should like to have you try, boys. You're not obliged to if you don't wish."

The Castilian answered for himself and the other: "We couldn't do it, Miss Grove. Somebody would have to put it in common talk for us, and then maybe we could get it by heart and say it. But we couldn't turn it into that kind of talk ourselves, right here before you. It would be ridic'lous."

The committee-girl in her turn passed the matter with a glance to Emerance, who said: "You're quite right, my boy. The fault is in the man who wrote the piece. He had a bit of nature to express, but he couldn't do it naturally. It isn't reasonable to expect you to improve on him offhand."

He sat down, and the teacher murmured to Parthenope, "How very strange!" After a blank hesitation throughout the room, she rose and said: "If no one else has any remarks to offer, the exercises are concluded. Children, you must all be here in your

places September 15th, at nine o'clock. Now you are dismissed."

The little assembly dispersed with difficulty. Among the visitors every one was talking about the recent occurrence, with looks at Emerance, whom they left apart. The boys and girls made their way out, and their mocking shouts and laughter were heard from the road as they ran away in their different directions.

"What is his fate?" "He dies at sunrise." "Say it in boy-talk!" one of the boys called far off, and jeers came back with hysterical shrieks from the girls. But the tumult had died away when Parthenope found herself outside with the two Kelwyns and confronted with Emerance's absent-minded looks. She was not sure that his part in the incident had been altogether dignified. Perhaps that was because it had apparently brought him into ridicule with these boys; but she resented the ridicule for him, and what Emerance had said interested her. She would like to talk with him about it and convince him that his point of view was not artistic; there was the ideal to be considered in everything, and there were other points which she believed he had not considered as much as she had. But this went out of her mind when he spoke.

"Why, I didn't know you were here!" he exclaimed, with a pleasure that imparted itself to her.

She put out her hand, and he clasped it eagerly. "Yes, I was there near the teacher. I didn't see you till you rose." She felt that she ought to have said "*quite* see you," but it was too late, now.

"Are you going home? May I go with you?" he asked, and she felt herself singled out for public notice by his acquaintance, till gradually they made their way through the crowd and up the road together. They

found a good many strawberries beside the walls, and they stopped to help the children gather them. At one place he got over the wall and stripped some leaves from a wild-grape vine, which she pinned together with little twigs into baskets to hold the berries. While he helped her fill them he was asking her about the people and events at the Family house, and telling her about his being in Boston. It had been very hot, there, for several days, and he said she was fortunate to be in the country, out of it. She said it had been hot in the country, too.

It was her chance to make that point about the ideal, but she must have made it very ineffectively, for he only looked dreamily at her when she recurred, abruptly and, she felt, awkwardly, to the incident in the school-house.

"Yes," he assented, without apparent consciousness of his assent; "it's an experiment I should like to try. I've thought of it a good deal in my teaching."

"What experiment?" she asked.

"Oh!" He came back from his distance. "I haven't touched your point. But the experiment I mean is the attempt to teach dramatically. All children delight in make-believe. Why shouldn't they make-believe with facts instead of fancies?"

"I don't believe I understand you," Parthenope said, awed by the mystery, but still authoritatively. "I don't believe you could apply the dramatic method to geography or arithmetic, for example."

"Don't you?" he deferred; but he had the courage to say: "Those were just the studies in which I thought it could be best employed: a commercial transaction, on any large or small scale, with buying and selling, and the necessary figuring, would interest the children. Or a lot of them coming from a far country or from

round the world, and looking up their travels on maps and globes. Don't you see?"

Parthenope shook her head. "It wouldn't be either good playing or good learning; I'm afraid the children would care more for the fun than the useful knowledge. No, Mr. Emerance, it strikes me as fantastic."

"It isn't, it isn't!" he protested. "I can convince you—"

"No, no," she laughed. "You think it's practicable because you wish to, and you wish to because you care more for the playing than for the teaching."

"If I believed that— You throw light on the very point that has been pressing itself home with me. Sometimes I should like to talk it all out with you."

"Well, there's nothing I like better than throwing light on points," she said, with the levity with which women know how to defer situations threatening a premature gravity.

He submitted, and they climbed back over the wall. While they stood waiting for the boys to accomplish their vainglorious feat of getting over unhelped, they heard the sound of wheels, and an open buggy came round a turn of the road. There were two women in the buggy — the teacher and the committee-girl. The teacher was driving, and Parthenope decided that she was the more practical. She seemed as if she were not going to stop after nodding to Parthenope, who said, "Won't you have some strawberries?" and put up the leaf-basket she was carrying, to the open but politely silent dismay of the Kelwyn boys. "You were very kind to me," she added, as if some justification were necessary. She was willing that her superior breeding should make itself felt in a superfluity of gratitude.

"Whoa!" the teacher called to her horse. "How beautiful they are! Oh, thank you! It was very nice of you to come in. We like to have people come to the examinations."

She was pleased, but if she was impressed by Parthenope's politeness she was not suppressed.

Emerance went round to the other side of the buggy, which began to move on again, and Parthenope, through her own talk with the teacher, heard the committee-girl saying: "I was very much interested by what you said to the boys. I'm afraid it wasn't much understood."

"I didn't expect it to be entirely," Emerance answered. "But I chose to take my chance. We must try to say something for that side when we can."

"Oh yes," the girl agreed. "And you mustn't be discouraged by me. Perhaps they will understand it afterward." But she seemed a little shy of Emerance, as a queer person of distinction, and she added to the teacher, "Nelly, I guess if we don't hurry we shall be late for tea."

"Well, I should say as *much!*" the teacher answered, gayly. "It was nearly five when we left the school, and it's full five now. Well, good-afternoon," she called over her shoulder to Parthenope when the horse had started forward at a pull of the reins.

In like manner the committee-girl called back to Emerance, "Well, good-afternoon," and he and Parthenope called after them, "Good-bye."

"Those are very able girls. They are both going to the Centennial, I hear," he said; and though "able girls" seemed a funny phrase to Parthenope, she did not remark on it.

"Yes?" she prompted him.

"I went in," he continued, "before the examinations began, and they showed me some of the children's work in drawings. They were after nature—leaves; and there were geometrical designs; very creditable. I thought their pupils were well forward in all their studies; didn't you?"

"I only got in for the 'scene,'" Parthenope answered; and now she thought he would tell her why he had been so particularly interested in that. But he did not. He only said:

"The committee man—or girl—said there used to be sixty little ones in that school, and now there are barely half. But the population all about is decreasing. It makes it rather melancholy, don't you think, to find so few houses?"

"Yes, indeed. And in the woods you come on old chimneys and cellars and bits of garden. I'm afraid of ghosts when I see them."

"*They* are the ghosts," the young man said.

Parthenope had been deciding that Emerance would not have talked so exclusively to the committee-girl and now so much more of her if his mind had not been on the pretty teacher. She *was* pretty; Parthenope was not going to hide it from herself, and, indeed, she did not know why she should.

She recurred to the teacher openly: "I've been trying to think whether her rivalling the morning hour, with all that gold in her mouth, is disfiguring or not. Perhaps it's charming, or makes her the more charming."

Emerance gave her a candid stare.

"Oh! You haven't followed my leaps and bounds back to that pretty teacher," she exulted, without knowing she exulted, and in her joy she had strength to demand, "What *is* that point you want the light of

wisdom on?" But again she saw that Emerance had not followed her.

When he did arrive, with a man's successive steps, he said: "Oh! Perhaps I should have to talk too much about myself."

"I can understand why you should hate that. There's nothing I dislike so much. But I should like to hear when you're ready."

"I sha'n't forget your promise," he said.

"And I," she challenged him, "shouldn't mind keeping it at once."

He hesitated, and then he said, thoughtfully, "It's always a question how much good you can do by interfering with people when you find them going wrong."

"Like those boys, you mean? If you want me to be perfectly frank, Mr. Emerance, I think there were two chances of being absurd to one of being useful in that case."

"And you thought me absurd?"

"I didn't say that; I say you took the chances."

"And one ought never to take such chances?"

"I didn't say that, either." She stiffened a little at his pursuit.

"But you think one oughtn't to act on impulse?"

"I can only say for myself," she returned, "that *I* never do." She remembered the incident of giving the coffee to the bear in time to save herself. "That is, I never do as a rule. And I believe it's the only safe rule. One's impulse may turn out inspiration, but it's taking chances, and one oughtn't to take chances. That's gambling!" Having levelled him with the dust, she relented from her superiority gently, almost tenderly. Certainly she relented encouragingly in asking, "Don't you think so?"

"I never thought of it in that way," he owned.

"Well," she conceded, "I don't know that I ever did myself. But I can look back and see that I must always have been governed by some such principle, and if that is so, oughtn't you to regard impulse as something coming within the region of ethics? Oughtn't you to regard it as immoral?" Parthenope had been in the habit of posing girls with this sort of talk. But in her heart it rather surprised her that she should have posed a young man by it when Emerance said:

"I should like to think the point over. I shouldn't like to assent to it—it's interesting—on impulse."

"Oh no," she returned, with bright tolerance. Then she did not know but he was making fun of her.

XVI

Mrs. Kite, sitting at her door in the long leisure of the summer afternoon, called to Parthenope as she came round the corner of the house with Emerance and the boys: "Your folks have gone to the village to get some baker's bread. I forgot to set mine last night. Why, Mr. Emerance! When did *you* get back?" She came gracefully forward to meet him, and he took off his hat to her as they shook hands.

"This morning. I hope you're all well, Mrs. Kite."

"I guess we're always well," she tinkled back. "Mr. Kite will be glad to see you; and Raney and Albert, too."

"Has Mr. Kite got any work for me?" Emerance asked, laughing.

"I don't know as he has. But you better stay to supper and ask."

"No, Mrs. Kite," Parthenope interposed, with an impulse from her old indignation at her cousins' inhospitality to Emerance, "he's engaged to take supper with *us*."

"All right," Mrs. Kite easily assented; "first come, first served. I don't know as I have got very much to offer visitors this evening."

Emerance looked from one to the other with a troubled countenance. Mrs. Kite turned away, smiling contentedly, and Parthenope from her doorstep, as she sank down on it, asked, easily, from her satisfied su-

periority, "Won't you have a threshold, Mr. Emerance?"

"Why, yes, thank you." He took his place on the wide stone lintel and faced her from the door-jamb opposite that against which she leaned, with the trouble still in his eyes.

She laughed with sudden misgiving. "You didn't like my implying that I had asked you to stay already?"

"Well, I can't say that. I liked it well enough; but that is one of the things I am uncertain about."

The two boys came to the girl's knee and asked, successively, "May we go and play with Arthur?"

"Yes, run along," she consented, and when the boys ran along, in that order of their years which regulated their whole lives, she pressed her question.

"I was thinking," he answered, "about the Shakers. They have the perpetual comfort of saying the thing that is."

"And not even implying the thing that is not?" she pursued him, in his reluctance.

"Now you are too hard on me! I didn't mean to—"

"Let me see what you were thinking? I know you didn't. But isn't there such a thing as carrying the truth too far? I believe you often hurt people's feelings by that, and cruelty is as bad as fibbing. Worse."

"The Shakers never hurt people's feelings; they are never cruel."

"Why don't you join them, then?"

"Ah," he said, "that is a hard question."

"Then you are quibbling as badly as I was." He looked at her with a knot of mystification between his brows. Suddenly she started forward. "What in the world is that?"

He glanced round over his shoulder, and then rose,

the more fully to take in the apparition. A large van, drawn by two horses, was coming up the road out of the shelter of the woods, and as it drew nearer it showed, gayly painted, a framework of wood under a dark tenting of oilcloth, all in very good repair, and with a certain consciousness of state in its leisurely advance. "It looks," Emerance said, absently, "like a circus-wagon strayed or stolen."

"No," Parthenope exulted, getting to her feet, "it's a gypsy-van. Where are the boys? They mustn't miss it."

They had not missed it. They had followed it out of the shadow of the woods, and Arthur Kite, who was with them, was already testing the temper of the swarthy men and of the three dogs which had accompanied it, a dog on either side, and another dog keeping sullenly under it.

The van stopped before the door, and Mrs. Kite came out to welcome it. Because she did so, perhaps, Parthenope remained standing on her threshold, with Emerance below her. "You want to come and see how nice it is inside," Mrs. Kite called to them. "It's a regular room."

But Parthenope sat down again, and from the back door of the van the figure of a large, elderly woman descended and came toward her. She was very dark, with coal-black eyes and coal-black hair turning ashen. She wore a flowing dress of white with a green calash bonnet, and a green barbaric scarf loosely twisted round her neck; yet higher on her throat she had a deep necklace of branchy coral, and she bore a various burden of baskets and trays of laces, cheap jewels, combs, brushes, soaps, and many knickknacks. Without speaking, she first spread her treasures on the grass, and when she had disposed of them in a glittering array,

to which her eyes and her white teeth and the jewels in her ears gleamed responsive, she invited the pretty miss to buy, squatting behind her wares and hugging her knees with hands which she detached now and then to take up the beads, or the machine laces which she pretended to have made herself, and dangling them before the girl. As she offered them she talked, answering willingly enough, at the young man's prompting, that she had lived twenty years in Canada, and had come from England, and this was her first trip in the United States. She was quite patient of Parthenope's refusals to buy, and said: "Look into our wagon, miss. My granddaughter is there; she will read your hand."

"Your granddaughter?" Parthenope answered. "Don't you want to look in?" she turned to Emerance, as if to justify her own weakness by his yielding, too.

"Why, yes," he assented, following her quick flight from the doorway to the van.

It was luxuriously appointed, with cushioned seats, cotton lace curtains, and mirrors. A comfortable bed was set crosswise of the rear, and on the thickly rugged floor, with her back to a frowzy boy on the front seat, crouched a lazy-eyed little maid, with her feet drawn close up under her. While the boy spoke now and then to the dogs in his Romany, she answered Emerance's questions in indifferent but not unamiable composure, to the effect chiefly that she was sixteen years old, and the wagon cost five hundred dollars, and her father dealt in horses. The man had untethered two colts from the tail of the wagon, and, holding by their halter-ropes, was letting them graze beside it. The old woman pressed toward the door with her trays and baskets. "Let her tell your fortune, my pretty

young lady. She knows the stars. She has got charms, and if there's anything bad in your stars the charm will make it all right. You needn't be afraid. I can see by looking at you that you will be very happy."

The gypsy girl rose and came nearer. "You must put out your hand," she bade Parthenope, who glanced at Emerance's grave face, in which she read misgiving. She perversely put out her hand in resentment of his tacit interference.

The gypsy studied it. "You will be married, and your husband will be a tall, thin man, with gray eyes and light hair." Parthenope was conscious of the impudent portraiture of Emerance, but he seemed not to recognize it. "You will have to look out, because he will be very strong-willed, and you are set in your ways, too. You will quarrel and you will want to part, but you will make it up and live happy. He will die before you do, but so old you won't want to marry again. Fifty cents."

The demand came like a part of the prediction, and it was a moment before Parthenope realized her indebtedness. At the same time, she realized her insolvency with an alarm that extorted from her the cry, "But I haven't any money!"

She had given her money to Kelwyn for safe-keeping on her arrival, going to him for her small occasions. Now he was away, and she knew that Mrs. Kelwyn had no change lying about.

"You can borrow it, pretty lady," the old gypsy urged, caressingly. The girl crept back to her place and lounged there, looking at Parthenope with a smile of indifference.

"I will ask Mrs. Kite for the money," Parthenope said. But she came back from her errand rueful. "The landlady's husband is away. But my cousin,

who has my money, will be back soon from the village and I will pay you."

The old woman said something in Romany to the man with the colts; he answered gruffly. "He says we have got to go now; we can't wait. The charm comes for the fifty cents, too; it will keep the quarrel from being bad."

Emerance stood silently looking on. "Mr. Emerance," Parthenope said, desperately, "will you lend me fifty cents till my cousins come back? I have been very foolish and I am ashamed. But—"

She stopped at a look of dismay in his face as great as her own. "Yes, yes," he began. "Very gladly, if—"

He was feeling in his pockets, one after another—those eight or ten pockets with which his clothes seemed so needlessly equipped. It was still the day of fractional currency, and from one pocket he brought forth a small wad of greenish paper worth twenty-five cents; from another a ten-cent note, and from yet another two five-cent notes; it was apparently all his store, but a desperate search revealed a lurking nickel, and the sum was made up and put into the palm of the gypsy, which, it seemed to Parthenope, had been stretched out all the time. They both drew a great sigh.

The gypsy smiled. "Have *your* fortune told, too, gentleman!"

"Thank you," Emerance replied; "I can't afford it."

As they walked back to their place on the threshold, Parthenope, with her face averse, seemed not to hear him as he said, "I will never try *that* again." He went on, as if philosophically interested in his explanation: "I had the notion of bringing no money with me and frankly living on what I could earn by any

work I happened to pick up. But it won't answer. It's too much like living off the country, as the tramps do."

"Yes," she said, "*I* have been living off the country—like a tramp. Thank you, Mr. Emerance," and she faced him flushed with a resentment that she knew was not real.

Apparently he knew it, too, for he was not abashed. "You don't mean that," he said, simply.

She was not to be outdone in frankness, if it came to that. "No; I said it because I was ashamed of my stubbornness and heedlessness."

He protested. "Oh, I should have liked to try it myself if I had supposed I had the money," he said.

"You didn't think of my borrowing of you?"

"No, I didn't think of that. I'm glad I had it to lend. It was a rather narrow escape."

He did not laugh, as Parthenope now thought he might, to relieve the tension. Perhaps he would not feel it respectful to laugh, and that was nice of him. It was so nice that it encouraged her to take the aggressive with him again. "You seem to be quite in the experimental stage," she mocked.

"I like to try things, yes," he assented. "Don't you?"

"Girls mustn't. A girl couldn't go about the country alone, even with her pocket—if she had one—full of money. I don't believe that the Shakers themselves would take in a destitute girl if she strayed up to the Office door. Are you going to stay with them?"

"They have no work for me. I am going to ask Mr. Kite for farm-work, and then, if he has none for me, I shall inquire round among the other farmers."

Women like to take liberties with spirits that they feel they can trust any lengths, and Parthenope now

abandoned herself to the opportunity. "Shall you tell them you can sleep in the barn?"

"I wouldn't specify it," Emerance returned from the gravity which he had put on. "But I would rather sleep in some of their barns than some of their bedrooms. There's more air."

She came to him from another point: "I thought you were going to start a cooking-school for summer boarders."

"Yes; I should really like to do that, but I haven't found the right place."

"You might," she went on, "get the Shakers to give you a room and invite the country people in to learn. Only they wouldn't come. No, you must begin with summer boarders. Why don't you go down to Ellison, below here? There are lots of summer boarders there. But I believe you want to get them in a camp where they won't have anything to eat but what you give them. Well, the Shaker woods, here, are big enough for a camp, and they would lend them to you."

He fell in with her joking: "The difficulty would be to get the summer boarders to camp; that would be harder than getting them to cook."

"Yes, but if you like to try things! Do you mean to say that you expect to go experimenting through life?" she said, reverting to a former point.

"I hardly know what I expect."

"It seems to me that the first thing is to have a definite ideal," Parthenope urged, with a New England ideal indefinitely coming to the top in her speech.

"I'm not sure. But how can you have a definite ideal without experimenting for it?"

"You can think it out beforehand. Nothing was ever accomplished without a high ideal." When she had said this it seemed to her that it was not absolutely

true. So she hedged: "Of course there are a great many good things that one does from the impulse of the moment. But could you have that impulse without having the ideal?"

He did not answer directly. "I think you would have to experiment for a definite ideal."

"No, you say that because you like experimenting. You said so yourself, or the same as said."

"Yes, I do like it. That's what makes life interesting. It's all an experiment—life is."

"Yes, and when you come to the end of life"—in her twenty-seventh year this seemed to her still ages away—"you have your experiment for your pains."

"But you have been interested all the time."

"I call that pagan." She did not know why she called it so, but her words sounded convincing to her.

"I'm not sure the pagans were always wrong," he said.

"They were wrong in the essentials," she decided.

"Were they?" he asked.

"It doesn't make them right to ask if they were."

They talked of various things, which she was always bringing back to the concrete, to herself and to him, when he had got them well away in the abstract. She had escaped from a great embarrassment, but she was not satisfied with her escape; she must somehow turn it into a triumph over him, but it was difficult, and there were phases of the situation in which it was as yet impossible. This Mr. Emerance was certainly a strange being. She had never felt before so much as if she were a disembodied spirit communing with another disembodied spirit, and she caught herself in a sigh as she saw the top of the wagon which held the returning Kelwyns rising above the swell of the road from the hollow toward the village.

She felt a subjective drop as from the clouds, but she alighted on her feet and ran toward them in the wagon, where before either of the Kelwyns had time to speak she said: "I want you to give me fifty cents, Cousin Elmer. I've had my fortune told, and Mr. Emerance lent it to me."

Kelwyn stared, daunted by the violently foreshortened facts, but his wife easily grasped them and reached the vital point—that the girl was feverishly happy, and that it was doubtful whether she ought to be. As Emerance was slowly making his way toward them she explained to her husband that it was the gypsies whom they had met, and that, of course, Parthenope had had to borrow the money from Mr. Emerance.

She ended, to Kelwyn's still clouded intelligence, "Give it to her, anyway, Elmer, and I will tell you about it afterward," and with that he got the money out of his pocket and put it in the girl's hand, which had been outstretched to him.

She turned and gave Emerance the fifty-cent note. "There!" she said, as if life, which was all experiment, could have had no more triumphant issue.

He asked Mrs. Kelwyn if he could not help her to get her purchases out of the wagon, while Kelwyn remained holding the horse, and Parthenope joined him in discharging the cargo.

Mrs. Kite witnessed their activities at her ease from her door in the ell. The sight of her seemed to remind Kelwyn of his wrongs. "I suppose Kite isn't anywhere about," he said. "Well, I will drive the horse into the barn and leave him there."

"Let me take him, Mr. Kelwyn," the young man entreated, putting himself at the horse's head. "I'll unharness the old fellow and give him his hay."

Kelwyn refused. "No, I shall leave him in the wagon. It will be a lesson to them. These people are getting insufferable. Kite agreed to hitch and unhitch the horse for me always, but half the time I have to do it for myself." He hesitated, and then he said to the young man, "If you will kindly throw the barn-doors open, however, I shall be greatly obliged to you."

"Why, certainly," Emerance said, and he walked ahead toward the barn.

Before they reached it the barn-doors were slid back from within, and Raney stood in the open space with his hands in his pockets disinterestedly regarding their progress. When they mounted the incline to the doorway, he took out his hands and said, "I put up the horse, Mr. Kelwyn."

"Where is Kite?" Kelwyn asked, in reluctantly parting with his grievance.

"I put up your horse," Raney repeated, noncommittally.

XVII

With the reason for his vexation, Kelwyn's vexation passed, and it passed the more quickly for finding his wife in very good humor when, after he had washed the smell of the leathern reins from his hands and gone about the house looking for her, he discovered her in what they called the guest-chamber putting it in the order it was idle to expect from Mrs. Kite.

"Parthenope," Mrs. Kelwyn explained, "is in the kitchen with Mrs. Kite, and Mr. Emerance has gone to help them. He is going to stay to supper, and I shall invite him to stay with us to-night; it's no more than is due to ourselves."

"Yes," Kelwyn assented; "I felt shabby about our letting him go before."

"It would have been forcing it if we had kept him," Mrs. Kelwyn evaded the point. "But it's pleasant to be able to make it up to him. He seems really nice."

"Yes, but we know nothing more about him than we did at first."

"Oh yes, we do. Parthenope found him at the school examination, and he corrected some of the exercises. He is cultivated, in a way. He seems to have all sorts of ideas, she says."

"Plenty of people have all sorts of ideas, my dear."

"Well, I'm glad on her account he is here to make another evening pass agreeably. It's dull for her. She thinks he behaved very delicately about lending her the money. He didn't *offer* to lend it. And it

was by the merest chance that he had it. He was going about, expecting to live by the work he got from the farmers. I don't understand it exactly; but as long as he doesn't offer to borrow money himself—"

"Yes."

The supper was not such a triumph as the former supper had been, or perhaps it was merely not such a novelty. Emerance had consented to be Mrs. Kelwyn's guest, and she would not let him join in the help that Parthenope offered Mrs. Kite after the meal was over. Perhaps because it lacked the former inspiration of an open fire, or perhaps because Kelwyn was tired, the talk languished, and presently Emerance made an excuse of wishing to tell Mrs. Kite something about the bread for breakfast, and left the Kelwyns. He must have despatched his instructions very promptly, for they seemed at once to hear him talking with Parthenope under the window in the dry summer night.

"Well, now," Mrs. Kelwyn said, "Parthenope is being amused, I am sure. Don't you think he is really very delicate-minded?"

"He is rather vague-minded; but he may be delicate-minded, too." Kelwyn took that tone toward his guest because he had found it well, in agreeing with his wife about people they both liked, to let her do most of the liking.

In the morning they all decided to go to the Shaker meeting, but at the hour when they were to start Emerance failed to join the Kelwyns, and Parthenope said she would go and look for him. Mrs. Kite was standing at her door dressed for the meeting, very ladylike in her Sunday gown and bonnet. She said she guessed Emerance and the boys were out in the barn, and Parthenope pushed on, thanking her. In the barn she saw the three boys through the open door, spellbound by

something Mr. Emerance was doing. He was lifting a pitchfork, with a block of wood stuck on its tines, to the roof of the barn, where there was a cluster of swallows' nests. He lowered it a little and then pushed it upward. Something fell from the block and struck on the barn floor at his feet like a small piece of wet clay. He bent over it with a sharp "Ah, that's too bad!" while the boys clustered about him. "Well, we must keep on trying," he said, and he put the thing, whatever it was, back on the block and lifted it again.

Francy Kelwyn caught sight of Parthenope at the barn-door and explained to her, excitedly: "It's a little swallow, and it fell out of the nest, and Mr. Emerance is putting it back to its father and mother."

The parent birds were wheeling overhead with keen cries of anxiety, and, whether it was their interference or the sense of the girl looking that caused the young man's aim to falter, he failed again, and the swallow fell with that moist thump as before. He took it up and examined it.

She came in and joined the group. "It's done for," Emerance said, sadly, and she rose to her normal height in suggesting, "Perhaps it's been experimented with too much."

"More than was good for it, anyway," he assented. "It's certainly dead. I ought to have got a ladder."

"Now," the Kite boy exulted, "we will have fun burying it."

The Kelwyn boys, attaching themselves on either side to the girl's skirt, implored her, "Oh, may we have fun burying it, Cousin Thennie?"

"No, no," she answered, severely, shaking them loose. "There is no time if you are going to the Shaker meeting with us."

"To see the Shakers dance?" They jumped up and

down with clasped hands and ran out before her, the Kite boy with them. He was not asked to go to the meeting, but he would have the whole fun of burying the swallow to himself.

Emerance's mind was apparently still dwelling on the tragedy. "I hope you don't think I was experimenting recklessly with that wretched little swallow. I was really trying to befriend it."

"Oh yes; I know," the girl said, not sure that she did not find his tenderness a little weak. "But the carryall is at the door, and my cousins are in, and we shall be late—"

It was rather a close fit, with the two men in front and the women on the back seat, and a boy wedged between each couple. A little way from the house they overtook Mrs. Kite walking. Kelwyn leaned back toward his wife: "I didn't know Mrs. Kite was going. Do you think we ought—"

"By no means! There isn't an atom of room. Besides, she is used to it and wouldn't thank us."

A distress came into Emerance's face. "Mrs. Kelwyn, I wish you would let me."

"No, indeed, Mr. Emerance. I have my reasons." She frowned mysteriously, and he submitted with a sigh.

The meeting was a large one that day. There were a number of visiting Brothers and Sisters from another family, and one of the Brothers, a noted preacher, was to speak. Whether it was knowledge of this fact or not, there was an unusual attendance from the world-outside, especially of summer-folks from Ellison. The singing was uncommonly brisk, and the Kelwyn boys had their reward in the dancing. After the Brothers and Sisters subsided from their thrilling march, and sat down motionless, with their large handkerchiefs

opened napkinwise on their knees, the boys fell asleep in the warm air, one with his head in his cousin's lap, and the other with his head boring into his mother's side.

The visiting Brother launched into his discourse, and it proved an attack on the earthly order, on marriage and giving in marriage. He prefaced his polemic by telling the story of one of the Brothers lately gathered in at his village, whose conscience had not been at ease in the earthly order, and who had left his wife and children to live the angelic life in the Family there. The kindred on both sides had tried to prevent him, and had thrown all the social and legal obstacles they could in his way. The story was the inversion of some such experience as the effort to escape from the community into the world might have been if it had been recounted with like fervor and intensity. The preacher, a large man with a double chin and a burly paunch, praised the celibacy of the Shakers, and denounced marriage as it was in the country round. "Go through the graveyards," he said, "and read the records on the tombstones of the delicate females, sometimes two or three, the wives of one husband, whose lives have been sacrificed. Look at the large families of children that wore their mothers out and grew up untrained and uneducated." He did not see how any sensible man or woman could hesitate to choose the better part and come and live, as that new Brother was living, away from the world and its snares in the safety of the Shaker home.

He seemed bigoted and conceited, but he gave evidence of sincerity.

Mrs. Kelwyn glanced from the face of the girl beside her, who seemed puzzled rather than abashed or offended, and then let her eye range along the faces of

the men sitting together in their ranks on the other side of the house. They expressed varying degrees of amusement, but no very deep concern; a strong indignation and dissent shone from the faces of most of the women. Emerance, as she saw him, sat still, with his face fixed in a sculpturesque quiet on the speaker. He seemed unconscious of him, and probably he had early seized some thread of the discourse and had gone into himself with it where he was no longer aware of what the preacher was saying. She was glad to see that Kelwyn looked as if he would like to get up and protest. Some of the Shaker Brothers seemed troubled, but the death-masks of the Sisters wore only a passive sadness, as if they were oppressed by the sense of a mystery beyond their powers.

When Elder Nathaniel came forward and said, after the preacher sat down, "The meeting is dismissed," Mrs. Kelwyn woke her children and led them away, as if she were shaking the dust off her feet for all three, and for her husband and her cousin as well.

Emerance went forward to unhitch the horse from the post at which he was slumbering as sweetly as if he had been indoors and had gone to sleep at the sermon, and he helped Mrs. Kelwyn to her place. He seemed cheerful, even gay. "I believe," he said, "I am going to walk back through the woods," and at this the Kelwyn boys, who had not yet been lifted into the wagon, each implored their mother, "Oh, let *us* walk back through the woods, mamma!"

"Oh, do let them, Cousin Carry," Parthenope joined in their prayer.

She was standing by the wheel with them, and Emerance challenged her with, "Why don't you come, too?"

"I hadn't been asked," she answered.

"Well, neither had the boys."

"I'm not a boy."

"Oh, then I ask you."

"Shall I, Cousin Carry?" Parthenope asked, in feigned subjection.

Mrs. Kelwyn said, as if the subjection were real, "Why, certainly," and the young man and young girl, with the two boys, struck into a wood-path from the road.

Mrs. Kite overtook the halting vehicle with a modest effect of not seeing it, but Mrs. Kelwyn, with the air of one who might as well suffer for a sheep as a lamb, called to her, "Won't you let us take you home, Mrs. Kite?"

"Why, yes," Mrs. Kite replied, with a ladylike acquiescence, which was partly temperamental and partly from the feeling of proprietorial right in the vehicle. She climbed to Mrs. Kelwyn's side, and as Kelwyn started up the horse she said, "Elder Rufus gave it to us married folks pretty strong, didn't he?"

Mrs. Kelwyn answered aloof, "I thought it in very poor taste."

"Well, I don't know. The more you see of the Shakers the more you think there is something to what they say. I don't know as I should want to be one of them; but, the way I look at a couple like Tad Allson and his wife, I don't think marriage is always such a great success."

"I don't suppose," Mrs. Kelwyn returned, severely, "that life among the Shakers would be a great success if the men were drunkards and the women were slatterns."

Mrs. Kite laughed with smooth cheerfulness. "Well, I guess that's something so." She did not apparently

take to herself the reproach of slattern, but if she had done so she would still have been secure in her husband's one most conspicuous virtue—he, as she often said, chewed and he smoked, but he never touched a drop.

XVIII

On their way home by the road which they had taken with Mrs. Kite the Kelwyns found the air as sultry, if not as close, as it had been in the Shaker meeting-house. But for the young people in the woods it renewed its freshness and sweetness, as if the trees of the forest had drawn it in deep silent breaths from the heart of the earth and respired it from their leaves. The boys ran before the girl and the young man into the shadow and then ran back to them, and again ran forward and lagged behind them, in a theory of going a walk which is common to dogs and boys.

Parthenope and Emerance found themselves in a grass-grown track among the trees, which he said must have been a wagon-road for hauling out the timber when the forest was cut twenty years before. It grew fainter and vaguer as they advanced, and could scarcely be discerned when it ended in what had been a clearing, but was now grown up to underbrush and brambles, with here and there an old apple-tree looking scared amid the wildings round it. A weedy pit, with the brick and mortar of a fallen chimney in it, was the cellar of a vanished house, and near this pit there yawned suddenly at his feet a well-hole, like a cyclopean eye, with the sinister gleam of water far down in it. He called to Parthenope to keep the boys back, and hastened to cover it with pieces of the mouldering joists and boards lying about.

"That gave me a good start," he said. "I wonder why the ruin of an old home like this is so dreadful."

"You said that such ruins were ghosts."

"Yes; I wonder why we should be afraid of the dead, anyway? I remember that after my father died I was afraid to be in the room with him, though he had never shown me anything but love and kindness all my life."

"I can't remember my father at all," the girl said. "Or my mother, either. But if their spirits came back and told me who they were I don't believe I should be afraid of them."

"I must be nearer the aboriginal savage and his superstitions. The curious thing is that we modern people don't believe in our superstitions."

"Yes, that is true, and it *is* curious. But I don't like bad signs. If that gypsy girl had told my fortune wrong, it would have made me miserable."

"I don't believe I should have minded that," he said.

They talked on, noting their characteristic likenesses and unlikenesses to each other, sitting on a rough-hewn log that had once been the threshold of the house, while the boys played cautiously about, keeping near them, as from a sense of the loneliness of the place.

"Do you suppose," Emerance asked, at a tangent, "that if this were the ruin of a Shaker family house it would be creepy?"

The girl reflected. "No, I don't suppose it would. They seem like ghosts now, and I don't believe they would want to haunt any place after they had got done with it. Besides—I don't know how to express it exactly—their life wouldn't have gone deep enough into it to keep them rooted."

"That's very interesting," Emerance said, and he

added, "Very interesting, indeed. Does their life seem so superficial, then?"

"Not that, exactly. But living that way in common, it seems more spread out—thinner."

"I wonder if they feel that?" he mused. "There is something in what you say."

"You oughtn't to make fulsome compliments," she said, stealing a look at him over her shoulder.

"How do you mean?"

"You're surprised that I can think at all."

"Oh no, oh no! Merely that—now this will offend you worse—that you *care* to think."

"That doesn't offend me, if it distinguishes between me and other girls. I don't believe they like to think. Do men?"

He laughed. "Not usually."

"Well, now, I am going to think very boldly," she said, and as he looked at her inquiringly she rose and shook some clinging bark and chips from her skirt. "I think we shall be late for dinner if we don't hurry home."

They joined in a light-hearted laugh. She called to the boys, and they all struck through the woods into a piece of pasture-land beyond. It was a narrow strip dividing them from the highway, where a house stood, with a woman in the open door at the back brushing out her long hair. She saw them coming, and shouted to them to look out or they would be mired in the swampy ground which she pointed at with her brush. She beckoned them to the path that led across the pasture to her house.

"It's that drunkard's," Parthenope explained. "He lent Mrs. Kite a book, an old novel, and I read the first volume. I wonder if we could get the second."

"We might try," Emerance suggested.

"For the sake of experiment?"

"Well, yes."

They found the man sitting on the front doorstep smoking, with his unkempt brood about him. The youngest, a little barefooted boy of two years, sat beside him playing with the edge of an axe; the others stared up at the strangers with an interest which their father did not seem to share, even when Parthenope had courage to ask about the book. He answered civilly that she was welcome to the other volume. He went back into the house for it, and returned with two volumes. He forgot, he said, that there were three in all, and he seemed to have read them. Emerance took them; they were volumes of an early American romance, in the original edition.

"You know these are worth money?" Emerance said.

"They belong to an uncle of mine; I couldn't sell them." The man's gaunt slip of a wife had joined them, with her hair now coiled in her neck; she was still pretty. "Go and get the rest," he ordered, without looking at her, and she came again with her arms full of the same author and screeched her comments, which he received without a word or glance in her direction. But there seemed a community of pride between them in the possession of something that others could value; neither of them were of such evil or unhappy countenance as Parthenope said she had expected when they had thanked them for the volumes which Emerance carried away for her.

The Kelwyn boys ran ahead with the effect of having escaped with their lives from the boys and dogs silently surrounding them during the parley.

It seemed by an afterthought that the woman screamed after the girl, "Well, call again!"

Parthenope said she would, and that Mrs. Allson must come and see Mrs. Kelwyn. "I don't know," she confided to Emerance, "whether I ought to have done that, but, if she comes, I can see her. Wasn't it dreadful, that child playing with the axe, and his father and mother walking over him and not paying the least attention? I wonder how such children get through the world."

"Perhaps," Emerance suggested, "there's a good deal more of what used to be called overruling Providence than people will allow nowadays."

"There must be. Oh, boys, see the rabbit!" she called to the little Kelwyns, and she pointed to the young wild thing loping across the road before them.

Emerance began to whistle softly, and the rabbit stopped and sat up, with its long ears quivering and its body throbbing with the strong pulse of its frightened heart. When the warbling note ceased, it vanished at a gallop into the wayside brambles.

"How beautiful!" the girl sighed. "I wish I could have done that."

"You had only to whistle."

"But I can't whistle."

"I will teach you, so that you can charm the next rabbit."

"A good many girls are learning to whistle now. I think they are overdoing it," she evaded him.

That afternoon, when Emerance was taking leave before going back to the Shakers', where a lodging had been fitted up for him in what he confessed was the house ordinarily occupied by tramps, Mrs. Kelwyn had a burst of hospitality which carried her so far that she said, "Why don't you come and stay here with us till the Shakers can provide properly for you?"

No one could have been more surprised than her

husband; but he said, as if the thing were not at all surprising: "Yes; why not? We have some eighteen or twenty rooms that you could have, if you don't want beds in them all. And you would be a brother in misfortune."

This was more than his wife meant him to say, but it was not more than enough to overcome the young man's reluctance, apparently. His reluctance was silent, however, and, after a longish pause, he said, "If you wouldn't mind my coming till the Shakers have some of their rooms free—"

"Why, certainly," Kelwyn said, "as long or as short a time as you like."

"And you would let me pay for my board—"

"It seems to me, Mr. Emerance, that you have been *working* for your board all along," Mrs. Kelwyn hastily interposed, as if to keep her husband from saying it and taking the credit of their hospitality from her.

"Oh, but that was different. That was merely in the abstract."

"Make it as much in the concrete as you like," Kelwyn cut in before his wife could think of the antithesis; and on terms that allowed Emerance to contribute a fair share to the general expense for provisions, and to exercise the right of intervening between the Kelwyns and Mrs. Kite's cooking when it became intolerable, the affair was arranged with the provisionality which he exacted. Parthenope had listened at the beginning in a dispassionate silence which she felt her due, but she did not wait for the end of the treaty. When he came out, Emerance found her sitting on the threshold stone with a listless and absent air.

"I don't know but you'll think I have acted on an impulse," he said, with the gladness of his heart fading a little from his face at his doubt of hers.

"Yes?" she asked, indifferently. "What have you done?"

"I've let your cousins take pity on me and give me food and shelter."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"Not quite; they are to let me work for my living. All the same, I feel like an intruder, but I had no one to advise me."

"Do you mean me?"

"Well, yes."

"I couldn't very well have advised you not to stay," she said as carelessly as before, but she added more kindly, "I am an intruder, too, you know." Then throwing her pretence of listlessness and absence to the winds she ended, "And as for impulse, I don't think I've been much guided by principle myself."

"Since when?" he asked, smiling gratefully.

"You think you couldn't say?"

"I might if I were driven into a corner."

"I won't drive you into a corner. I think you are very good. Perhaps you would let me help you work for a living. Or teach me how to work for mine, I mean."

"As far as I know I will. I suppose I shall always be a pedagogue of one kind or other."

She considered now that he needed a little rap to restore a manly tone in him. It was the duty of a woman to keep a man from ever taking an unmanly tone, and if Emerance was humbled by an unworthy consciousness she would uplift him by humbling him still more.

"It's a noble calling, pedagogy; I can't think of anything higher than teaching the more advanced branches of cookery."

Emerance looked at her and then he laughed. But whether at her irony or his own sense of deserving it she did not care. She laughed, too.

XIX

The simple idyl of the passing days varied little in its dramatic range, though there was difference enough in its incidents to keep the fancy and the sympathy amused. One morning when Parthenope and Emerance were getting the common breakfast, there came a family of organ-grinders, who paused under the elms as if arrested there by the scent of the coffee stealing from the kitchen. There were two men—an older man who sat silently apart in the shade and a young man who came forward and offered to play. He had the sardonic eyes of a goat, but the baby in the arms of a young mother had a Napoleonic face, classic and mature. She herself was beautiful, and she said they were all from the mountains near Genoa and were presently on their way to the next town. They were peasants, but they had a grace which made Parthenope sigh aloud in her thought of the contrast they offered to the mannerless uncouthness of the Yankee country-folks. The woman complained of the heat, but sweetly; and the young man said they liked their wandering life; the old man smiled benignly, but said nothing, except to thank Parthenope beautifully when she served him first with the coffee and bread which she brought out for the whole family.

In the understanding of their pastoral situation tacit between them, "What part of the idyl should you call this?" she asked Emerance when the Italians departed, scattering benedictions behind them; and he answered:

"Oh, a little dramatic interlude."

"I don't see much drama in it," she said, looking after them down the road. "I wish they could have taken me with them. I could have got a tambourine, and played and danced, and people would have brought me out coffee."

"Not as good as you make," Emerance was sure.

"Your gems are burning; I can smell them here," she said, and she fled before him into the kitchen.

There seemed some mysterious property in his nature which had the virtue of turning the prose of every day into the poetry of every other day, but her youth accepted the poetry without the scrutiny which might have proved self-analysis in the end.

They let the Kelwyns take the carryall for the village shopping, and stayed at home that day, Parthenope to put the house in order, and Emerance to hoe the corn, which had been outstripped by the weeds in the hot weather. About noon an Irish linen-peddler showed a sulky visage in the doorway. Emerance came in from the garden, as if casually, and then they invited the peddler in, too; being so civilly treated, he promptly grew humbler and told his simple tale. He had been an iron-puddler in a Pittsburg foundry, and had turned linen-peddler because he was out of work. But prosperity fled before him as he wandered eastward. He did not sell much linen at the farm-houses; people thought they could get things cheaper at the stores, and generally he travelled by rail from village to village, and so found what market he could. Parthenope gave him a glass of lemonade, and then he shouldered his pack and strode out into the furnace of the heat, while they remained and philosophized his case.

"I could never be a peddler," she said, thoughtfully. "I should not have the courage to push in."

"But if necessity had the courage, and pushed you in?"

"It seemed impudence in his case at first. I'm glad it wasn't. How hard life seems when you come face to face with it!"

They tried to be sad, but they could not. Perhaps life as they saw it reflected in each other's eyes was not hard; the trouble they borrowed did not really harass them.

A storm came up and raged for an hour without cooling the air. One of the clouds hung so low as to mix with the pines in the horse-pasture, where the ghostly estray which the Kite boy had turned out to grass there wavered in and out of sight as the lightning rent the lowering vapor.

"This is like the day when the bear-leader came," Parthenope mused aloud. "I hope my cousins and the boys are under shelter."

"Oh, they have turned in somewhere with this storm coming up."

"I've often wondered what became of that bear-leader. What does become of bear-leaders when they are not leading their bears?" she questioned on. "They must find it hard to get lodgings. Are there hotels where they make a specialty of taking in bears and their leaders, do you suppose?"

They played with the question and then dropped it in gay hopelessness.

Emerance came to the window, where she was looking down, and saw a wayfarer leaving the kitchen steps with the hand-out which Mrs. Kite never refused his tribe.

He was squalid enough, but sometimes the tramps were interesting. Parthenope sketched one: a little, sailorlike Frenchman, with a swarthy face and black

eyes and thin gold earrings that twinkled together. He stood for his portrait with his hands full of Mrs. Kite's cold griddle-cakes, smiling, and he finally accepted a ten-cent note with charming effusion.

Another day, at the close of a long afternoon's ramble with Emerance, as they were emerging from a wood-road into the highway, a tramp as far out of the average as this acceptable little Frenchman was in his way seemed to rise from the ground like a human cloud. He was a gigantic negro, with a sullen, bestial face, which looked the wickeder because of his vast, naked feet. He had his boots and a very good new-looking hand-bag slung on a stick. He faltered a moment, glaring at them with bloodshot eyes, and then lurked away into the shadow of the woods.

"What a horror, poor soul!" the voice of Emerance said close to her ear, and she realized that she had shrunk to his side.

"Yes," she said, detaching herself with a quavering effort for lightness. "I much prefer the little Frenchman; but I suppose one mustn't be too choice in tramps." She tried to joke away the evidence of her fright.

"They probably don't choose themselves," Emerance said.

"Probably not," she answered, with hauteur. "Something might be done about them."

"Well, they're arresting them a good deal, and banishing or imprisoning them, I suppose," he concluded, sadly. "Something of the kind has to be done. A fellow like that makes one think."

"My cousin has a pistol," she said, severely.

Emerance only said, "Ah?" But that evening, after supper, he asked Kelwyn if he had ever used his pistol at all, and, without owning to the ignominy of Mrs.

Kelwyn's control, Kelwyn said he had thought of shooting at a mark with it. They went out into the orchard, followed by the Kite boy, the young Kelwyns being forbidden by their mother, who had consented to her husband's share in the danger because she was ashamed to deny him before another man. They tried shooting at a tin cup eight paces away, and missed it six times out of six; they reduced the distance by a half and still missed it.

"I hope, Mr. Emerance," Kelwyn said, "that we are too civilized for this sort of thing. We have been aiming all our lives at something higher than tin cups with something more accurate than revolvers. If the custom of duelling should be restored, as some people think it ought, I shouldn't mind fighting with you."

"I might hit you by accident," the young man suggested.

"That is true. Are you too young, I wonder, to have read the Reverend Doctor Knott's funeral oration on the Burr-Hamilton duel? There were some fine things in it, especially about Burr, like: 'If there be tears in heaven, a pious mother looks down and weeps.' And the doctor got over his difficulty of saying that he aimed his pistol at Hamilton by a very handsome paraphrase: 'He pointed at that incorruptible bosom the instrument of death.'"

"Yes," Emerance said; "I know that oration. I have rather revived the old fashion with my boys of having them learn passages of eloquence. I think it lifts their thoughts somewhat, and for the moment it keeps their tongues from slang. I don't know whether they realize the fact of the duel very clearly. It's surprising how incredible the duel has become already, how impossible."

"Still, there are a great many pistols made. I once

saw a big mound of them in Colt's factory. When I bought mine I realized that every one was made to kill a man. It was a heap of potential homicide."

They walked homeward talking, and as they passed the old well near the barn, disused since the Shakers had brought the spring down from the upland above, Kelwyn said, "I wonder what effect this pistol would have on the water here if I dropped it in."

"I should think the iron would make it tonic and good for the horses, if they ever drank of it again."

Kelwyn let the pistol fall, and they listened an appreciable moment for the splash. "I shouldn't have thought it was so deep." When he told his wife, she was not as glad as he expected. She said, "I don't know—if there are going to be *black* tramps about!"

The help which Emerance now rendered Mrs. Kite in the kitchen, and the help which Parthenope rendered him, eventuated in so large a release of Mrs. Kite from that part of her cares that she could sit much of the time and watch the two at work without having to join in it, except in shelling pease or stringing beans, or some other task that did not break the flow of conversation or require steps. She showed a gay surprise at their finding so much of the garden stuff ready to use when they came in from picking it, but this surprise, like the admiration she had expressed for their cooking, presently passed, and she accepted the situation with a serenity unruffled by a sense of responsibility for the other details of housework, which she left to Mrs. Kelwyn, and came back to after they were done in an amiable amusement that she should have forgotten them. She was, without too keenly realizing it, having a rest such as she had not known since she could remember. Emerance had cleared out the milk-

room for her, and set the pans there after having instructed Raney and Albert how to guard against cowiness in milking; and there remained nothing very definite for her to do but to provide for her own family the food to which they were used and to which they continued loyal. Under these circumstances it was not strange that her thoughts should stray beyond their wonted limits, and she announced one day toward the end of June that she believed she should go and see her sister over in the edge of Hancock. She made a show of having been constantly employed in the service of her guests. "I can cook up enough things to last my folks over a few days, and you can make Raney and Albert help you while I'm gone."

She had been having for her own immediate assistance the daughter of a neighbor, and the day after she went on her visit the neighbor came to fetch his daughter away. While the girl was putting her things together he stood on the green before the house leaning on a long staff like a classic shepherd, and with Parthenope surreptitiously sketching him he began to tell what he would do with that place if he had it and had five thousand dollars to spend on it. For one thing, he would put a piazza all round it. Then, before he could say what else, his daughter came out with her bundle, and they moved away together with visible reluctance. The old Family house was, in fact, the pride and envy of the whole region. All the neighbors wanted it, and each said how he would fit it up for a summer hotel if he had it. The Kites alone seemed satisfied with it as it was, and this, where there was so little in their favor, commended them to the Kelwyns, who were disturbed in their sense of possession by a sense of the covetous environment. It was a comfort, under the circumstances, to have Emerance in the

house with them, though his ideas of private property were of a latitude which Kelwyn's science could not approve. Still, so long as he did not suggest filling the vacant rooms with a colony of houseless poor, which seemed to be his notion of the use that the empty summer hotels ought to be put to in the winter, his heresies could be tolerated.

Mrs. Kelwyn, in a revulsion from her earlier diffidence, trusted him in everything even more implicitly than her husband. She let him go off on long rambles in the wild region with her two boys, and with Parthenope to look after them; and she sent them all on the errands to the village grocer and butcher, which, in the frequent failure of the Kites' provisioning, she used to do with Kelwyn. Her demoralization included the temperamental defects of the lazy old horse which Kite had provided them, and which she had early denounced as the worst horse in existence. She now began to say that the carryall was too heavy for him, but Emerance differed from her on that point, and then she contented herself with making him promise to drive very slowly and have everybody get out going up-hill. Sometimes he forgot her instruction in his talks with Parthenope, which were apt to take the form of dispute and a final difference of opinion. The girl felt that he was wrong in these differences, but she blamed herself more than she blamed him for her want of severity with him.

Emerance's traditions were probably not those which would have made him feel it strange that he should be wandering about the lonely country with a young girl; and the conventions of Parthenope's Boston were not yet so strict, thirty five or six years ago, that after the first days of strangeness she should be conscious in his companionship. Perhaps that something of a wilding

quality in her nature came from her artist father and mother, and had never been quelled by her environment. Her aunt, though of a world much more regulated, lived rather out of her world; she had left the girl mostly to her own inspirations in conduct, and Parthenope had found these sufficient in the simple ways of society just beginning to imagine chaperonage. If it was not the first society of her ancestral city, it was society that read and thought and idealized, and was of a freedom gladder than that which has come in something like excess to the society which now neither reads nor thinks nor idealizes. If she had known it—but no girl could have known it—she was standing on the verge of that America which is now so remote in everything but time, and was even then rounding away with such girlhood as hers into the past which can hardly be recalled in any future of the world. It was sweet and dear; with its mixture of the simple and the gentle, it was nearer the Golden Age than any the race has yet known; and it followed fitly upon the great war which had established liberty on a wider basis than ever before in history. These two could not feel their relation to the conventional, the social, fact; they were a young man and a young girl walking or driving together in the pastures or along the wood-roads in the fragrant summer mornings; and in their intense personalization they could not know how elemental they were, how akin to earth and air, and of one blood with the grass and the trees, with the same ichor in their veins.

They often stopped at the Shakers for pleasure, but one morning they went on the business of selecting the stuff for a writing-desk, which was to be a surprise for Kelwyn. He had decided that he could not afford it at the figure named by Raney for making it, and

Emerance, in conspiracy with Mrs. Kelwyn, had proposed building it from designs by Parthenope: he said he sometimes did odd jobs of carpentering. The designer came with him into the loft of the old Shaker shop to choose the plank, and afterward she sat by, most of the time, while he planed it and put it together, and corrected his errors as to her intentions in the plan. In that day of Eastlake furniture the desk was to be a remorseless sort of akimbo Gothic, which permitted no luxurious deviations from the most virtuous rigidity. When Parthenope was tired of sitting on a trestle and looking on, she went and chatted with the Office Sisters; they took a less fearful interest in her going about with a young man than the unworldlier inmates of the Family houses, who caught glimpses of them round the valves of half-open doors or through edges of lifted window-curtains, and forbiddenly conjectured, when they were gone, how such a girl must feel.

Once, as she was driving through the village with Emerance, they saw Elder Nathaniel lying beside a great fire of refuse broom-corn on the grass, which he was keeping from running wild in the garden. He looked so sweet and beautiful as he lay there that Parthenope wanted to sketch him, but suddenly he caught sight of them and came forward to the fence, and began to chat courteously, while the flames behind him tossed richly against the green curtain of the raspberry vines. "Now and then," he said, at parting, "I meet with some one who has ideas, and that brightens everything up. If you keep your hold of ideas, and do not lose yourselves in trivial cares, your lives will be as bright as you have made my half-hour."

The old man seemed quite naturally to have joined their lives in his thought, and Emerance was silent as they drove away; but Parthenope was quite uncon-

scious, and laughed and said how sweet the Elder was, and did not Emerance think him lovely, with his thin, aquiline face and his white hair? She was not so much at her ease as to Emerance's looks, when her ownership of them was imagined by a great, silly, buxom girl, overripe for her years, when they stopped to ask her if she would sell them some cherries, at a wayside farm-house. She was talking to some guinea-fowls on terms of cosey confidence as if they were human hens, but she came forward in her bare head and large, white, bare feet. "My," she gurgled, "if I thought I was goin' to have company I guess I should had my shoes on." She apparently expected them to enjoy her predicament, and she told Emerance the family she lived with had gone to the village and she could not sell him any cherries, but she guessed he could pick all he wanted to eat. She got him a dish to pick them in, and while he mounted the tree she praised him over the palings to Parthenope in undertone. "*He's* just about the handsomest fellow yet! *I* should be jealous if another girl as much as winked at him." She was not discouraged by Parthenope's failure to humor her joke, and when Emerance came out of the tree she laughed, "Got enough?" and she said to Parthenope: "Well, call again. Wish I could let you take the dish along too!" She warned them they would not find any thimble-berries on that road; there used to be plenty; but the farmers thought they hurt the looks of the walls, and they had cut the vines down that spring.

They ate the cherries, with the help of the boys, and pushed farther on, having the whole afternoon before them in the study of the pleasant country-side, and the villages which were sometimes clusters of farm-houses, and with once a little milling hamlet, and a mill-

wife gave his shoulder a little triumphant push. Emerance chirruped to his horse, but before he could start him the man of the cottage shouted, "Well, I guess the reds *have* it!" and his wife vanished indoors.

After the horse had really begun to move away, Emerance said, from a dreamy silence, "May I ask why you preferred red?"

"Why," she answered, with the need she felt of marking an æsthetical inferiority in him, "I don't suppose I can tell. It is impossible to explain a feeling."

"A feeling for color?" he asked, idly flicking at the harness with his whip. "I don't believe I have it. Is it something that can be acquired? Like right principles, for instance?"

"No, I don't think it can. It has to be born in you. Perhaps it's like right principles in that, though. Ruskin seems to think they're the same: that the great colorists were morally great."

"I wonder if that's so," the young man questioned, and he was pensively silent as if he were thinking the point over self-reproachfully. But he said, after a moment, "I don't believe there is anything in that idea," and then she was so abashed by his boldness that she became rather meek, and began trying quite humbly to say why dull red would be better than dark green for that wooden extension.

XX

The Fourth of July had been heralded by a summer evening of that exquisite New England quality which has its like nowhere else in the world. There was a clear sunset, and the young moon lingered in the western sky above the great stretch of forest. The two families, parted by the stretch of greensward before their separate doors, sat under the trees; Parthenope had been drawing pictures of the three boys pulling the spring wagon up and down the road. It was so peaceful that Kelwyn lost the feeling of nether unrest which at other times tormented him, and began to hope that somehow the Kites would yet do. He did not, in fact, much mind being wakened from his first sleep that night by the firing of cannon and ringing of bells in the surrounding villages, or being broken of his morning nap by the torpedoes and fire-crackers which the three boys exploded under his window.

The pyrotechnics of the evening were typically reluctant. Emerance had charge of them, with Raney's help; but the pin-wheels caught and hung fizzing instead of revolving with a coruscation of sparks; the rockets shot sideways and ascended in unexpected tangeats; the Roman candles alone did well, and each of the boys was allowed to fire one off. The two Kelwyn boys had their hands held by their father; the Kite boy grasped his candle unhelped, and fired it into his family circle.

This had been enlarged by the return of his mother,

who had come back with a serener self-satisfaction than she had shown before she went. She had begun by telling Parthenope and Emerance that she guessed she would get supper herself that evening, and in the meal she prepared she had so perfectly reverted to the original type of her cookery that the Kelwyns made their supper of canned tongue and of tea that they had brewed on the table.

At the show of fire-works she put on the hostess, as if the entertainment was hers, and invited the neighbors who came, out of apparent proportion to the scanty population, to take eligible places with her family. Lurking on the edge of this inner group Parthenope found the wife of the drunkard Allson, and when the display was over, she asked the wild girlish creature into the house. She stood with her baby in her arms while Mrs. Kelwyn bade her an exemplary good night, driving her boys before her to their beds; she followed their going with a sort of scorn.

"Your aunt got nothing but them two boys?" she asked.

"My cousin? That's all."

"My! I got six."

"Why, how old are you?"

"I'm under twenty-nine, I guess."

"And I'm twenty-seven myself."

"You're a regular old maid."

"Well," Parthenope retorted, with amusement, "you're a regular young mother."

"It's full as bad, you mean. Well, I don't know but it is. Sometimes I feel as if I should go crazy with 'em all, but then again I don't know what I should do without 'em when Tad gets on one of his tears. You hear that Shaker Elder preach agin marryin' last Sunday?"

"Yes."

"I heard tell what he said. I guess he don't know everything. If he did he wouldn't said so much about the children. I guess there'd be more divorces and more killin's if it wa'n't for them. Tad ain't bad when he's himself, but when he's been at the jug he don't know what he's up to. Well, there! I don't know as I ought to talk to a young lady about such things, but it's kind of curious about children. I thought I shouldn't ever feel to'ds the rest the same as I did to the first; but there, the last is always the first, if you can understand."

"I think I can," Parthenope answered, gravely.

"It's always the baby till the next baby comes. I guess they all have their turn of bein' the first. Sometimes it don't seem as if I could get through the trouble they give. But I hain't ever lost a single one; I believe if I did it would about kill me. I should like the Shakers to understand that. The Shaker *ladies* do, I guess!"

Parthenope asked her if she would not sit down, but she said she guessed not; she guessed she must be going. "I guess your cousin thought it was time, too." She looked around the great room. "My, but this is a nice place! I wish Jasper'd give *us* the chance. And he *would,* too, I believe, if he could ha' placed any dependence on Tad. I could ha' cooked for you! I bet." Parthenope thought it best not to respond, and the mother said, "Well, I must be goin'."

She shifted her baby from one arm to the other, and the child looked at Parthenope with sweet, sleepy eyes. "Oh, you dear!" the girl cooed to it. "May I kiss you good night, baby?"

"I guess she's clean enough," the mother said, pulling her baby's stiff little dress straight. "I like

to have my children know it's the Fourth. The rest has been to the Sunday-school picnic. I guess my boys are waitin' for me outside *now*. Say by-by to the lady. Well, she's too sleepy, I guess. One thing," she turned to Parthenope in parting, "Don't you let them Shakers get around you with their talk. I've had as hard a time as any, but it's more of an even thing than they say, marryin' is. *I* know, and they *don't*. Well, good night to you," she ended abruptly.

Kelwyn was going to town in the morning, and Emerance with Parthenope drove to the station with him. She had errands at the village stores, and then the two started home together. At a turn where a wood road left the highways he proposed to follow it into the Shaker forest, in the belief that it would come out where he had seen a wood road going in near the old Family house. The woods, damped and cooled by an overnight rain, were scented with the leaves and bark of the trees, and the rich, melancholy odor of the rotting logs, felled or fallen long ago and left in an immemorial decay. They did not hurry because they could not, and also because they would not. At times Emerance got out and led the horse over a space where the road had forgotten itself, and helped it to remember where it was going. After such a moment he remounted to his place beside the girl with a long sigh of satisfaction.

"Are you so tired?" she asked, with a smile for his sigh. "You had better let me get out and lead the horse after this."

"Oh, it isn't that," he answered; "I was just thinking that I would like to ask you something—ask you about something—" He lifted his eyes and looked at her, but her face was averted. "Will you answer frankly?"

She now, as if she had gained time enough, faced him, and asked in answer, "Do *you* find it so difficult to be frank?"

"Sometimes. Or always with myself. Don't you?"

She hesitated. "I can tell better when I know what you want to ask."

He did not respond to her prompting, but interposed a generalization.

"I suppose my indecision, my want of a fixed purpose in life, comes from my love of experimenting."

"Was that what you wanted to ask me about?" she returned.

But he did not answer. He said, "You know I am going to the Centennial next week."

"Oh yes," she caught herself from betraying her surprise. "That is, I didn't know it."

"Yes, I've an idea it might be a turning-point for me. I've wasted too much time between doing and not doing; and something tremendously practical, like the Centennial, might have instruction for me."

"I understand," she said, but she did not. She was really wondering what he meant.

"I have been freer with my time," he said, with the air of explaining, "because it seemed all to belong to me to do the most or the least with it for myself and very indirectly for other people. But of late I have begun to think—to hope—that my time might be more important, more directly important, to others; and I have wanted to decide upon the future without so much loss of the present."

"Yes," she said, evasively; "I think that we all live too much in the future. We ought to make more of the present, oughtn't we?"

"That was what I meant," he answered, with a breath irrelevantly deep. "I have had too many strings

to my bow, I'm afraid. In a sort of way, or up to a certain point, I believe I could be one of several things. What I *have* been is a teacher, but I have sometimes thought of the law and sometimes of the ministry. They are a long road, though, and though I have so much time I have not so much money. Then I have thought of journalism; I have done some newspaper work, and I could get a reporter's place. But there is something else, more to my fancy if not my reason. I suppose I've left mentioning it to the last because it mightn't appear so wise to — others. Do you remember that day at the school examination?" he asked.

"Oh yes," Parthenope said, and there flashed upon her the vision of that pretty young teacher with the golden hair and the gold filling in her teeth. But she dismissed it with the instant perception that the teacher could not be in the line of his thinking as a vocation.

"I have always been fond of the theatre," he went on. "I have tried to make my school-boys realize the beauty of truth in their school theatricals. I have a very dear friend who is a great actor—though all the world doesn't know it yet, as it will some day. He is a great citizen too, and we met first at a reform meeting, where I heard him speak. He let me come to some of his rehearsals, where he was training his company for one of his plays; he is a dramatist as well as an actor. Once, toward the end of my last summer's vacation, he gave me a small part for a week to fill a vacant place."

He had gone on incoherently, rapidly; now he paused promptingly, and she asked, "And did you like it?"

"It was the greatest joy of my life," he answered. Then, as she remained silent, he added, rather blankly:

"You don't like the notion? You don't approve of the theatre?"

"I? But I don't see what I have to do with it. It is very interesting."

"And you don't think me a less serious person because I love the theatre?"

"No, no; I know that there have been very good actors and actresses," she said, from the ethicism which must always be the first thing with her. "My father and mother," she particularized, "knew Charlotte Cushman when they were all living in Rome."

"Did they? But you mustn't misunderstand. If I didn't love the art of the theatre I'am afraid I shouldn't care for what we call the 'good' it can do. If the art didn't come first I would rather be a minister. A minister must be an actor, you know."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. But— I had better go on perhaps—"

"Do." She could only be monosyllabic.

"It's merely this: I enjoyed the acting, but first I want to live it. I want to act in a play of my own. I have an idea for one. I have the scene and the persons, but I want the experience. I will tell you about it."

"Yes."

"Of course, it has to be a love-story and it has to end well."

He seemed to be consulting her, and she said, "If it isn't a tragedy, of course it must end well."

He laughed. "It isn't exactly a comedy, either. Life isn't, you know."

"No," she said in a sudden rueful sense of life's anomalies.

"I thought of having the scene partly in a Shaker community; the principal characters wouldn't be

Shakers, but there are features of the Shaker life that would be very effective on the stage. Their dancing—"

"But that's a part of their worship!" she broke in, horrified, and the more resolute not to yield the point because she felt its temptation for him.

"That's true. But the Greek drama represented moments of worship. The *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, you know, begins with an act of worship." She looked unconvinced, and he added: "To be sure, it was their *own* worship. I must think it over; I wouldn't do anything to wound the Shakers for the world."

"Of course not. Well?" she prompted.

He flicked at a fly with the limp whip-lash, and then he drew the lines taut and started the horse from his sleep-walking into a waking-walk. "I haven't worked it out yet in my own mind. I can't tell you, now. May I tell you when I come back from the Centennial?"

"Does the hero go to the Centennial?"

"Yes, the hero goes to the Centennial."

"That *is* new. Does the heroine go, too?"

"That's what I don't know yet; I'm going to find out. What do you think of my notion?"

"Of going to the Centennial?"

"No, the larger notion: living a play and acting it."

She knew this was what he had meant, and she felt that in a manner they had changed natures; he was now direct and she was elusive.

"Oh, that is too large a question for me."

"You don't like the notion."

"You mustn't say that. I don't like the notion of being judge. I don't feel"—Parthenope did not realize how novel this attitude was for her—"competent to judge." If the problem had not been so many-sided, if the dilemma had not had so many horns, if

she had not felt so bound to him, her answer might have been different. As it was, she took refuge in an appearance little short of antipathetic reluctance.

"Ah," he said, "I see you don't like it. Well!" He set his jaw, but whether with the resolve to submit to her dislike or defy it she had not quite the courage to ask herself.

XXI

"Mr. Emerance is going to the Centennial, he says," Parthenope began, abruptly, when she came in upon Mrs. Kelwyn, sitting distraught in the great dancing-room of the Family house which served them as a parlor, where she was pulling over some sewing.

"Is he?" Mrs. Kelwyn answered, absently.

"Yes; next week. Don't you think it's rather strange he's not mentioned it before?"

Mrs. Kelwyn only heaved a long, inattentive sigh in answering, "Well, it may be the best thing."

"*He* thinks it will decide his future in life. He is trying to think whether he had better be a lawyer, or a minister, or an actor, or a dramatist, or keep on a plain teacher."

"An *actor?*" Mrs. Kelwyn caught at the word. "What nonsense!"

"He doesn't think so."

"When did he say that?"

"Just now—on the way home. He says he loves the art of the theatre, but he believes it can do a great deal of good. I suppose it can," the girl sighed, questioningly. "But what I don't like is any person's being of so many minds. He is too experimental altogether."

"I don't know," Mrs. Kelwyn said. "A good many young men must be so, especially when they are at all gifted."

"Is Mr. Emerance so very gifted? How does he

show it?" Parthenope somehow liked her cousin's praise of him; and she was willing to provoke more of it by her blame. "If I were a man I should have one aim in life, and I should keep to it till I died. I wouldn't let anything swerve me from it."

Mrs. Kelwyn answered, in a certain remoteness from the case of Mr. Emerance: "It is very hard to keep to a single purpose—for men. The best of them can't do it. I have just been blaming Elmer for his indecision, but I'm not sure I was right. Men see so many sides."

"Cousin Elmer? I supposed he had never had but one ideal!"

"Oh, it isn't that," Mrs. Kelwyn almost moaned; "it's this terrible situation. We don't either of us know what to do next."

"Why, has anything new happened?"

"I don't know whether it's new or not. Yes, I suppose it is. Brother Jasper has just been here to tell us that he has heard a bad account of the man he was going to put in the Kites' place. He has an ugly temper, and he made a scandal where he came from by courting his present wife while the first was dying of consumption. Jasper must have had it on his conscience to let us know; he was worried in the spring by the Kites' failure to get ready for us. But he let us come, and perhaps now he wants to make it up to us."

"It seems to me," the girl said, from her remoteness, "that country people are very strange about their marriages. No wonder the Shakers don't approve of marriage."

"Then," Mrs. Kelwyn continued, ignoring the generality, "there has been a pettifogging lawyer here from the village to see the Kites. I'm afraid they are going to make trouble for us."

"Why, they can't have you *arrested*?"

"Not arrested, exactly; but they might sue us, or something like that. I don't know what. But we have started in the direction of putting them out of the place, and it seems we can't stop. There seems to be no end to it all. Did you have a pleasant drive?"

"Yes—yes. Very pleasant."

The two boys came running up from below and announced, "The old Shaker gentleman is down-stairs."

"Elder Nathaniel?" Mrs. Kelwyn conjectured. "You go down and see him, Thennie dear. He's coming about the Kites, of course. I don't believe I could bear to talk the situation over any more just now. *When* did Mr. Emerance say he was going to the Centennial?"

"He didn't say what day. It seems to be rather sudden. But if it's going to decide his future for him, he may think he can't go too soon. It's a good deal for the hundredth anniversary of our Independence to decide!"

Parthenope fancied herself saying this to Emerance, but it was really addressed to Mrs. Kelwyn, who answered, remotely: "Yes, yes. Do go down and see what Elder Nathaniel has to say."

The girl found the old man sitting on the threshold-stone gently fanning himself with his wide straw hat, in the wind of which his thin white hair waved where it hung long in his neck. Two rocking-chairs stood on the turf under the great elm, and "Let us sit down here, Elder Nathaniel," she said, leading the way to them; "that stone is so uncomfortable."

"Oh, nay," he returned; but he followed her, and they sat down together facing each other. "I am sorry Friend Kelwyn is not here. The boys said he had gone to Boston."

"Yes, and Mrs. Kelwyn asked me to excuse her for not coming down; she is very tired."

"She has been worried by what Jasper told them about those folks he was going to put here?"

"A little. But, Elder Nathaniel"—she left the question of the Kelwyns in the larger interest of a general inquiry—"are *all* the married people about here divorced, or living unhappily, or something?"

"Oh, nay," the Elder answered, with a certain wariness. "There are many couples here living rightly in the earthly order."

"Because," she explained, "I never heard of such things in Boston."

"People know more about each other in the country," he said.

"Do you mean," she asked, "that there is just as much unhappiness among the married people in Boston, only we don't know it?"

"Nay, I didn't say that."

"Then"—she went forward at a great bound—"why don't the Shakers approve of marriage?"

"We approve of it in the earthly order," he answered. "But we believe the angelic life is better. In the resurrection there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage."

"Of course, after you are dead—"

"Nay, we think we are continuously alive to all eternity. In the Family the heavenly order is honored; in the world-outside, the earthly order. But we do not condemn the earthly order. When we see a married pair living peaceably and affectionately together we respect them."

"Then, why don't more of them live that way together?" As if she felt the futility of her question the girl smiled forlornly.

The old man smiled compassionately. "Nay, I cannot tell you that. Perhaps it is because they are too ignorant of life and expect too much of each other. They are mostly very young and inexperienced."

"I see," the girl said; "you think they ought to wait."

"Nay, if they waited they might not wish to marry at all," the Elder suggested.

"That is true," she sighed; "it seems a difficult problem. They certainly ought to know each other a long time."

She fell into a troubled muse, from which she was startled after what seemed to her a much greater interval than it really was by his saying, "My own partner and I had known each other from childhood."

"Why, Elder Nathaniel!" she cried. "Were *you* ever married?"

"Oh, yee; we had a family of children when we were led to enter upon the angelic life here. It was quite a little trial for us to separate."

"You had a *family?*" She started forward in her chair. "Did you have any—girls?"

"Yee; we had three daughters and two sons."

"And what became—did they—were *they* gathered in, too?"

"They were children. The boys followed me into the Church Family and the girls went with their mother into the Family that lived here." He looked up and around at the great old house before which they sat. "The Family was fairly large then."

"*Elder* Nathaniel!" the girl said. After a moment of amaze, she asked, "And are you all living in the Church Family now?"

"Nay; my wife died before the Family left this house."

"Oh!" the girl said, tenderly.

As if her compassion made it easier for him to go on, he continued: "My daughters got to feeling foolish about some of the young men in the Family and ran away to be married. One of my sons died, and the other left us for the world-outside. You have heard of Mabel Northland?"

"I think I have seen the name," Parthenope said, suddenly inattentive to the general inquiry. "Isn't she some kind of actress?"

"Yee; he is with her company."

"And—and does he play, too? Is he on the stage?"

"Nay; he is her press agent, as they call it."

"Oh," she said, and she sat staring at Elder Nathaniel, who softly passed his tongue over his lower lip as he drooped forward in his chair. "Elder Nathaniel," she began again, "I am afraid I have pained you—made you pain yourself."

"Oh, nay; it is a long time ago. Now and then my son comes to see me. My daughters are settled in the West. They are well-to-do, and in the earthly order they are happy for what I know."

"Yes," she vaguely assented. "Do you—do you like your son being connected with the theatre?"

"I do not mind that. When Friend Mabel was in Boston last I went down to see her act; he wished it. I thought it was a foolish play; but the theatre is no worse than other things in the world-outside. I could see how it might do some good with the right kind of play."

"Did you?" she asked, with an unreasoned gratitude. "You mean with a piece that teaches a good lesson?"

"Yee. Any piece that shows the life of the world-outside as it really is would teach a good lesson. Friend Mabel's piece was foolish because it did not

do that. It pretended that when the young folks who had got foolish about each other were married they were going to be happy because they were married."

"I see," Parthenope said. "I suppose that is the way people want plays to end," she reflected. "Thank you very much, Elder Nathaniel."

She sat silent, and the Elder was silent too, but he did not offer to go at once. When at last he made a movement to go it seemed to her that she had been hinting him away.

"Elder Nathaniel," she asked, more abruptly than perhaps she would if she had not wished to disabuse him of any such suspicion, "if your daughters—or one of them—had wished to marry an actor, would you have felt worse than for her to marry a Shaker?"

"When they married," he answered, severely, "they ceased to be Shakers."

"Yes, I know; I don't mean Shakers, exactly. I mean some other kind of profession."

"Nay, I cannot answer that. I have never thought of it."

"Of course not. What you would wish them to do would be to think very seriously before they married at all."

"Nay, the thinking seriously might better the case, but it would not change its nature. I could have had no wish but that they should remain Shakers."

"Yes, I know. You must think I am very stupid."

He had risen, but he hesitated, as if he thought she was going to say more. Then he said: "I must be going, now. I bid you good-afternoon."

She watched him up the path that led toward the Church Family house through the woods. Then she went indoors to her cousin, whom she found still busy putting the contents of her work-basket in order.

"Well," Mrs. Kelwyn asked, without looking up, "what did Elder Nathaniel have to say?"

"He wasn't so outright as that Brother from Canbury; but I believe he feels just the same about it."

"Feels the same?" Now Mrs. Kelwyn looked up. "About what?"

"About marriage," Parthenope answered.

Mrs. Kelwyn stared. "I thought you were talking about those people Jasper proposed putting in here?"

"Oh, we *were*," the girl answered, all too compliantly. "That was what led up to it. From what he said I shouldn't think it would be easy to find any nice *married* couple to keep house for you. His own daughters ran away with Shaker Brothers and got married, and his son is the press agent of that Mabel Northland the actress."

"Parthenope Brook, what *are* you talking about?"

"I forgot. You didn't know that Elder Nathaniel came here with a family of his own?"

"No. But what in the world has that got to do with somebody in the place of the Kites?"

Parthenope had to own that directly it had nothing to do. She escaped from the question with which Mrs. Kelwyn must have visited her in a less distracted moment, on the plea that she would have to see what she could get for supper, if Mrs. Kite would let her get anything at all.

The daze in which she had returned from her drive with Emerance seemed to have been deepened by her efforts to escape from it. She had got no light upon herself either from Mrs. Kelwyn or Elder Nathaniel. Nevertheless, she was in a conditional clearness as to her part in the event which she forecast now this way and now that.

XXII

Mrs. Kite was less difficult than when she first returned from her visit to her friends. She had apparently relinquished the ideals they had inspired, or the prospect of change in her relations to the Kelwyns had softened her toward them. She now let Parthenope use her kitchen at will, and sat by, watching her and talking of what she and her family should do next, and how soon they would have to leave when the crops had been appraised and everything was settled.

She had taken no steps toward removal, but the rumor of the Kites' going had spread so widely that Kelwyn had received three offers from families who were willing to take their place. It was more and more clear that in the neighbors' estimation the Kites had wasted an enviable opportunity. Upon the whole, the knowledge of this public opinion had comforted and strengthened Kelwyn, and on his return from Boston he professed an appetite for supper such as he had not shown for breakfast. He had driven from the station to the Church Family, and Emerance had come home with him, but he had gone to Mrs. Kite's door. He seemed to be helping Parthenope with the supper, and Mrs. Kite joined them in bringing in the dishes from the kitchen. All was, in fact, so quite as it had been at its best a month before that Mrs. Kelwyn could not believe in the events which had threatened a different catastrophe. Kite returned from his fields with the big boy and Raney; and, after they had eaten their

evening meal, they came out and lounged upon the grass before the kitchen door and talked and smoked. When Kite rose to go and give a last look at his horses for the night, he called over his shoulder to Kelwyn, where he sat with his family group, "Want I should have you yer team ready to go to the Shakers after breakfast?"

"What *does* it mean, Elmer?" his wife entreated. "Surely they're not expecting to stay, are they, after all that's been done?"

"It seems like a convulsive effort to be commonly decent," he assented, in a puzzle with the fact.

"Well, it's sickening. *She's* been hanging about, offering to do things, since you went this morning. Do you suppose they've just realized it?"

"Perhaps they've heard of the general willingness to replace them, and have begun to think they are losing something worth having. I wish they'd thought so sooner," Kelwyn sighed, with a look up at the great friendly house. "If they'd only been *half* possible!"

"Yes. And now it's too late. They *must* go. You see, don't you?"

"Oh yes, I see."

Parthenope and Emerance had been strolling down the dimming road, and now they came back and stood expectant.

"It's the usual topic," Mrs. Kelwyn explained. "We are wishing that the Kites wouldn't *try* to do, since they *can't* do, and they're plainly trying to do. We hate to turn them out of the best home they've ever had."

"Especially," Kelwyn added, "as we don't know whom to put in their place."

"No, Elmer, I won't let you attribute a selfish motive to yourself."

"Then, say a scientific motive. We are simply conforming to the course of civilization, Mr. Emerance. We are the stronger race pushing the weaker to the wall."

Emerance consented, with a dreamy air, "That does seem the order of history."

"I don't see why you say that, Mr. Emerance," Mrs. Kelwyn returned, in a note of indignation. "I should think any dispassionate person would say *we* had been pushed to the wall, even if we are the stronger race."

"Oh," the young man apologized, "I meant that some such event is always inevitable. People seem to talk up, or they talk down, to one another, and not face to face on the same level. So there is never a perfect understanding between them."

"Very well, then, Mr. Emerance, we will make you our ambassador to the Kites. *I* thought we had explained ourselves fully from the very beginning. There has been talking enough, but perhaps we don't speak the same language. If you know theirs—"

"I can't be sure," Emerance returned, "and as your ambassador I might make bad worse. It might be better not to interrupt the order of history."

Parthenope took no part in the discussion, which ended here with Mrs. Kelwyn's saying, from the asperity of spent nerves, "Well, I must go in and put the boys to bed."

"I'll go and help you," Parthenope volunteered. "Good-night." She did not specialize Emerance, but he answered, "Good-night," as if she had. When she was alone with Mrs. Kelwyn she said, "I don't believe he meant anything more than to agree to what Cousin Elmer said."

"Oh, I knew that."

"Then I don't understand why you were so severe."

In the ensuing days, which now prolonged themselves into a fortnight, Kelwyn hesitated over his duty to himself and family, which he felt to be more and more obvious. It was even a duty to the Kites, especially when they did worse than usual, if there could be any exception that was worse than the ordinary course of their inefficiency and inadequacy. But a thing that clarified itself more satisfactorily to Kelwyn than his obvious duty was the wrong he was suffering at the hands of the Shakers, or, rather, the hands of Brother Jasper. In the slow and painful evolution of his thoughts he realized that Brother Jasper was standing from under and letting him take the whole responsibility of dispossessing the Kites. He was letting them believe, and logically letting them say, that they could have got on with other people, and if they could not get on with the Kelwyns, then they were being turned out of house and home because the Kelwyns were unreasonable and unjust.

The time came when Kelwyn resolved he would endure the state of things no longer, and declared that Brother Jasper should take his full share in ending it.

"Don't do anything rash, Elmer," his wife cautioned him, from admiration of the inflexible decision she saw in his face.

"Rash doesn't seem just the word for a delay of six or seven weeks. But rash or not, I am going to see Jasper at once and have it over."

"Well, I hope you will act prudently," she cautioned further, from that vague necessity wives feel of holding their husbands back from a step they have reached in common.

Kelwyn did not answer, but he got his hat and stick.

"You are going to walk?" she temporized.

"That is what the horse would do if I could get him, but I believe Kite has taken him for his work," Kelwyn answered, and without more words he set off through the woods to the Church Family.

At the Office the Sisters told him that Jasper was at the barn hitching up, and Kelwyn found him there buckling the holdbacks of the harness round the shafts.

"Brother Jasper," he said, without waiting for any form of greeting, "I want you to go with me to Kite where he is working and hear what I have to say to him."

"I was just tackling up to go and see some folks we were going to put in for you," Brother Jasper said, looking at him over the horse's back.

"Well, never mind that now. We will cross that river when we come to it. Now you have got to face Kite with me and confirm what I say; you have got to take your share in turning him out. You put him in."

Brother Jasper made no answer, but he scolded the horse with unshakerly violence in terms which, if they had been translated into the parlance of the world-outside, would have been of the effect of swearing, while he went on buckling the shaft-strap under the horse, running the reins through the rings on the hames to the bridle, and then giving a final pull at the whole harness to make sure that everything was secure. "If you'll get in, now," he said at last, and he mounted beside Kelwyn and drove off to the meadow where Kite was at work, and called him away from the other mowers.

Kite came up and sat down under the tree where Kelwyn was waiting for him, and took out his knife and began whittling a stick. He was pale, and to

Kelwyn's eyes hideous with hate, so that Kelwyn was glad that he sat aloof in the buggy, and sorry that he had thrown his revolver into the well; it would at least have been a show of weapon against weapon. But as it was, he would not fear.

"Mr. Kite," he began, "I hear that you are holding me responsible for your going away, and I have brought Brother Jasper with me to tell you that it is he who is putting you out of the house," and at this unsparing statement Jasper winced, and his face twisted itself in an expression of his helpless inner protest.

Kite whittled furiously at his stick, cutting large slices from it, while Kelwyn followed his blade in fearful fascination. "I'd like to know what's gone wrong with you now? Was it that steak I got ye for your dinner yesterday? It was the best piece of steak in the meat-store, and you can ask Billings himself."

"We won't go into particulars," Kelwyn said. "All there is of it is you won't do, and you don't seem to want to do."

"No, I guess you don't want to go into particulars," Kite retorted. "There ain't a single damn thing ye got against us. You're mighty hard folks to suit; no boarder of mine ever complained before. You may bet your sweet life I wouldn't take ye another year for all the money you got, even if you got enough to pay a decent price for your board."

Kelwyn ignored the insinuation of his poverty, so far as open recognition went, but in the sting of the insult he forgot the stately position he had taken. He now went into the particulars of the wrongs he had suffered, and he enumerated them with a volubility worthy of a woman. He was not stayed by Kite's denial of every instance, and, as happens with people who try to free their minds in anger, he found more

and more rancor in his. At last they both stopped, breathless, and wiped the drops of fury from their faces.

It was very squalid, and Kelwyn felt the shame of the squabble the more because he suspected that at the bottom of his heart Brother Jasper thought he had been too exacting. When he got breath for a renewal of the dispute, he said, some octaves lower than before:

"It isn't a question of another year; it's a question of this year; and Brother Jasper will tell you that you are going, not because you can't suit *us*, but because you are not fit to take boarders at all."

Brother Jasper did not speak, and Kelwyn had to ask him, "Is that so, Brother Jasper?"

Then from Brother Jasper's writhing features a kind of small scream emitted itself in a sharp "Yee" that was like the cry of a sufferer in having a tooth drawn.

"All right, Jasper," Kite said, rising to his feet, with the open knife in his hand, to which Kelwyn's eyes still clung. He snapped it to and slipped it into his pocket. "I know where *you* stand." Then he added, with a glare at Kelwyn, "We'll see what the law o' this is," and hulked away to join the mowers, who had been listening their best from the other side of the meadow.

Jasper remounted to the seat beside Kelwyn, but at a remove which symbolized the moral gulf between them.

"Want I should drive ye home?" he asked, but the brief transit was rather lengthened than shortened by the "Yees" and "Nays" with which he responded to the points of justification which Kelwyn turned toward him.

In fact, he left Kelwyn to feel that he had played

a cruel part, not only toward him, but toward Kite, from whom he had torn every tatter of self-respect in his effort to share the responsibility with Brother Jasper. It needed all the resentment he could heat up in his heart to support him in the retrospect of an action which had seemed to him so clear and right before he took it.

His wife's praise of his courage and firmness failed of effect, and he was still ashamed, rather than proud, of his part when he met Elder Nathaniel on his way to the post-office in the afternoon, and the Elder expressed his personal regret for the hopeless pass the affair had come to. It appeared that something like a Family meeting had been held, and that the Office Sisters had pursuantly gone to see Mrs. Kite and urged her to advise her husband to go quietly. They had made her understand that the Family was determined to give the house to some one who could satisfy the Kelwyns, and that it was useless for her to hold out against them, and she had admitted the wisdom of this. "But," Elder Nathaniel said, "she thought she had done everything she could to please you, and, if she could only find out where she hadn't suited, she was sure she could make it right. I have no doubt now that they will give up peaceably, and we shall have no further trouble."

If this was not soothing to Kelwyn's feeling, in the circumstances, Mrs. Kite's return to her futile efforts to please him and his family added to his self-reproach. He found greater comfort in Kite's sullen attitude, where he held aloof from all part in her endeavors, and the whole Sunday morning that followed, when none of the Kelwyns had heart for going to the Shaker meeting, they saw him sulking at the barn-door. In the afternoon he drove about in a close, warm rain with

two shabby friends, as if there were some sort of conspiracy afoot; but there was, apparently, no appeal to the law, and Kelwyn heard next day from the Shakers that Kite had agreed to go out; that referees were coming that week to appraise his crops and decide what would be due him from the Family. In the mean time Mrs. Kite resumed her confidence in their friendly relations, and talked to Parthenope as if they were going on together indefinitely. The storm had so far cleared the sky that in the ensuing calm a sort of toleration, if not kindness, grew up between the rival camps, and in this truce the Kelwyns could not refuse to acknowledge to themselves that the Kites were not wilfully bad. At the worst, they questioned, were they not ignorant and helpless? It was true that the renewal of the momentary amenities of the past were wholly through the woman's efforts, but the man was not actively offensive.

A night or two after Kelwyn's meeting with Kite in the meadow, Parthenope, leaning from her window and looking out into the dark, heard her cousin and Emerance talking in their chairs under the elm. Kelwyn was saying: "It is strange how difficult it is to withdraw from any human relation, no matter how provisional. There is always an unexpected wrench, a rending of fibres, a pang of remorse."

The girl knew very well that Kelwyn was thinking of his quarrel with Kite, but she did not know how he was always trying to pull himself up from the degradation of an encounter which Mrs. Kelwyn had represented to her as something almost heroic, and from which he had barely escaped with his life.

She was more interested in what Emerance answered. "Yes, there seems to be a quality of death

in every human parting. When we go a journey and leave friends behind it is like a voluntary dying."

"But I didn't mean that exactly," Kelwyn returned, in a note of vexation. "I meant merely the termination of the common concords, agreements, partnerships."

"Oh yes; I was following a suggestion from your thought rather than the thought itself. But if we carry your thought further to the most enduring of provisional relations—"

He paused, and Kelwyn asked, "To marriage?"

"Yes; I have often wondered how the parties to a divorce, people who had once cared for each other, really felt when it came to the point of severing." Parthenope found herself listening acutely, eavesdropping, as it were, with all her might, though there was nothing that she would have abhorred more than eavesdropping. "I have wondered whether there wasn't always a touch of regret, a lingering kindness as they had when their outlook was the brightest."

This struck Parthenope as beautiful, and she was vexed more than she could have expressed with Kelwyn's answering commonplace: "Every one has good qualities as well as bad. No doubt they see each other's good qualities at such a time. But if there was any appreciable kindness, perhaps there would be no divorces."

"No," the young man assented; and then there was a little silence in which Parthenope tried to follow his course of thinking back to its real source, as she had so easily followed Kelwyn's. They knew so little of Emerance; he might easily, in his obscure past, have been married and divorced; or much more probably he might have been engaged, and in the image of a divorce he might have been brooding on a broken engagement.

"But to return to the original point," Kelwyn said, in breaking the silence, "I think that at the end of every relation in life there is a sort of blind desire, unreasonable and illogical, to have it on again. If it ends abruptly or inimically this is especially the case. We go back of the cause of disagreement and find potentialities of continued reciprocity. We see defects in ourselves and excellences in our antagonist—if it has come to antagonism—and we wish we could try it all over again. I am speaking in the abstract, of course." Kelwyn recovered himself from a position that gave too much away to his own consciousness. "As a matter of fact, it might be quite the other way, and we be very glad to have the thing over for good and all."

"Oh yes," Emerance said, and then there was a sound of rising and of feet stirring in the dark.

"I think we'll take these chairs in. It's so very close that I shouldn't be surprised if there were a storm before morning. Good-night," she heard Kelwyn say, and then Emerance answer:

"Good-night." But he added: "I don't think I'll go in just yet. It is pleasanter outdoors than in, such a night. Don't trouble about the chairs; I'll bring them."

"All right," Kelwyn said, and now Parthenope was aware of Emerance sitting there in the dark alone and thinking. What was he thinking? She would have liked to know. If it had been possible to eavesdrop his thoughts she would have done it; people often tried to penetrate one another's thoughts, and she never heard that it was wrong or even disgraceful. She fancied keeping him company in the dark where he sat outside, and she held a long tacit colloquy with him on the most serious things. They were both very seri-

ous. They were confidential. They told each other the history of their lives. At last she lay down on her bed in the close, hot air, but she did not know she had slept when about midnight she was awakened by a wild screaming, which seemed to come from the dwelling of their nearest neighbor, an old woman, who lived a little way down the road, alone in her two rooms. Parthenope had been in during the forenoon to see her, and had found her lying on her high old-fashioned bed, with the sabre of her son, a soldier of the Civil War, crossed over a withered wreath, at the bed-head. She said she was not feeling just well, and now the girl imagined those shrieks coming from her. She roused her cousins and straggled forth with them into the cloud-broken moonlight that now hid and now rendered picturesque their common dishabille. The Kites were up and out with a lantern; Emerance was there, too, and they joined forces for the succor of their neighbor. Kite went to the window with his lantern and rapped on the pane, while his wife asked, in her sweet treble, "Are you sick, Mrs. Ager?"

After an interval, as if for waking and understanding, the old woman answered, No, she was very much better.

Then Mrs. Kite said, "We thought we heard you screaming. Well, good-night."

"I guess," her husband said, tolerantly, to Parthenope, "that it was a screech-owl we heard. But sometime there's goin' to be trouble if that old fool keeps on livin' by herself there and these tramps get much thicker. She'd ought to be put somewheres, but as long as she's got enough to live on the selectmen can't touch her. She'll die in that shanty of her'n some night if she don't get killed first."

The Kites went back to their place beyond the

kitchen, and when they had disappeared with their lantern the Kelwyns lingered a moment at their door, looking up into the moon-broken clouds. Parthenope sat down on the threshold-stone. "I am not going in just yet," she said; "it's choking in my room, and it's not going to rain."

"I don't wonder you don't want to go in," Mrs. Kelwyn conceded. "But I don't like your staying out here alone, Thennie," she added.

A cloud had passed over the moon, and it could not be seen that Emerance had sat down at the other end of the threshold, but his voice placed him when he said, "I will stay and protect her if you'll let me, Mrs. Kelwyn."

"I shall not need any protection," Parthenope answered.

"Oh, well, then," Mrs. Kelwyn said, vaguely, as she led her husband indoors.

Parthenope was the first to break the silence to which she was left with Emerance in a murmured, "How perfectly still it is."

"Yes; we only need some sound to make the stillness evident, just as we need some one with us when we wish to feel ourselves alone."

"I don't know that I need any one," she demurred, "to help me realize that I'm alone."

"I didn't mean *you* did. When I said *we* I meant *I*."

"That is rather trivial, Mr. Emerance, if you'll allow me to say so."

"I like to have you frank with me. Do you think that I am trivial?"

"Not always. But often enough to provoke people with you."

"I'm afraid you're right," he said, with a sigh which

she was not sure was sincere. "I suppose I'm nothing but a dreamer, after all."

She defended him from himself. "I don't think you're a dreamer. Or not altogether. Doesn't Emerson say, 'Be true to the dream of thy youth'?"

"Ah, but which one?" he asked.

"Now that is what I call *truly* trivial — making light of serious things."

"But I'm not; I'm quite in earnest. With all my various dreaming — my experimenting, as you call it—"

"Oh, if you mean that, yes," she assented, and then, not knowing just where they were, or not being sure what next she should say in criticism of him, she remarked, abstractly, "Isn't it strange what life seems to come to?"

"It certainly is," he agreed, in turn. "But do you mean generally or particularly?"

"Oh, I was just thinking of poor Mrs. Ager yonder. I suppose she was a bright young girl once, and had a whole tribe of brothers and sisters, as they used to in the country, and believed she was having the gayest kind of times when she grew up; and then she got married and had a large family of her own, and her husband died, and her children got married, most of them, and one son went to the war and was killed, and they brought his sword home and put it over the head of her bed. And now she lives there alone, just one little shrivelled up old scrap of all the lives she once belonged to."

"Yes," he said, "that is very pathetic. If something like such a common history could be put whole into a play—"

"But it couldn't. A play must be made up of a few great moments."

"Ah, I'm not so sure of that!"

"Of course if you could hint at it all in a sort of prologue, and then get in the feeling of this wild neighborhood, and have it end tragically, with her getting killed in her house alone there by tramps— I do believe Mr. Kite is right about it! Some day the neighbors will find her dead there."

"Yes. Or we could have it end well. Mrs. Ager could make an outcry, as we thought she did to-night; and Kite could come to the rescue. He seems to be the neighborhood moralist and philanthropist."

"Now you are trivial again! I should think you would be awed by the sort of mixture such a man is; he and his wife both. Sometimes they really seem to want to do right."

"I suppose we all do; but some of us find it more difficult than others."

"Do you excuse them on that account?" she demanded, severely. "Perhaps you think they are more to be considered than my cousins, whose lives they have made so miserable here. I dare say you think that rather than put the Kites out we ought to go away ourselves and leave the house to them. I really believe you do!" If she expected him to be daunted by her charge she had to own to herself that he was right in answering nothing to it. She ended, ineffectively enough, "But where could we go?"

"Well," he surprised her in answering, "I do happen to have heard of a place—"

"Oh! Have you been making inquiries?" she asked. But she felt that her question was vulgar, and she added, "I beg your pardon."

He did not seem to have taken offence. "You remember that stone cottage?"

"Not the one where they couldn't agree whether to

paint the ell red or green?" she demanded, tumultuously.

"Yes; the people in it want to go to the seaside for July and August, and they had heard of your troubles here—"

"Our troubles seem to have filled the neighborhood for miles around!"

"And the man was at the post-office to-day when I went for my letters, and he asked if your cousins wouldn't like to take his house. I hesitated about telling Mr. Kelwyn because I didn't just know how to do it without seeming to meddle—"

"Don't dream of apologizing. I'm not sure but we ought to be on our bended knees in gratitude, or that *they* won't be as soon as I tell them. I'll wake them out of their sleep to tell them!" she declared, with more irony than she meant as she showed herself in the dimness suddenly looming to her feet. But she did not go in at once. She said, as if it followed, "The moon feels fairly warm."

A curtain of cloud had swept aside, and in a space of sheer blue the moon hung, round, with a soft glow of almost ivory-white.

"Perhaps there's reflected heat as well as light from it," he suggested, looking at her looking at the moon.

"You'll be wanting to experiment with it on the crops," she said.

"But you know that it's the warm nights that make the corn grow. In the great corn-raising States they say you can hear it growing at night."

She laughed. "*You* could probably. I doubt if I could. But there is one thing I don't understand about you, Mr. Emerance. Why do you always take the part of these wretched beings around here, no matter how they behave or how degraded they are?"

"Do I do that?" he asked, but apparently with more curiosity than denial.

"I must leave you to think it out. Good-night," she said, abruptly.

"Oh no! Don't go!" he entreated, in what she thought a strange manner, though he really added nothing more than, "I'm going to Boston, and then to the Centennial to-morrow, you know."

"To-morrow? Oh yes; I didn't know it was to-morrow. Then I must change good-night to good-bye."

"I shouldn't like that any better— I—" But he stopped.

"How mysterious!" she said; but her heart beat quickly, for now if it was coming, that greatest it of all, she ought not to have let it come unless she wished for it as she believed a woman ought to wish with her whole soul. She had her ideal of this matter, as she had of the other great matters of life; her ideal was an instant and entire passion for surrender and possession, and as far as she could see in this rather dismaying moment there was and there had never been anything of the kind with her toward him. She did not fail to blame herself for having idly swayed and drifted on the surface of a current that had nothing torrential in it; but she believed that she could have made excuses for herself. She had always felt in many ways so much beyond him; not above him, but beyond him. It was not so much that his level was lower than hers, but his point of arrival was so much short of hers. She was older in spirit, more settled in principle, more convinced in opinion. She was of quite another civilization and an experience of the world altogether different. Yet she ought not to have let it come to what it was coming to. She had been wrong, and now she could only be right by being cruel. If

Parthenope was rather cold she did not like being cruel.

One imperceptible instant she waited for him to go on before she said, "Well, I'll keep to my original good-night." He echoed, "Good-night," with an accent of submission that haunted her to her room, but left her to a various mind. Among her ideals none was more distinct than that of the manliness which must take all the risks in love-making. Her temperamental adequacy to the demands of life upon herself left her without much compassion for those who paltered with destiny and feared to put their fate to the touch. She had a difficulty in the matter that did not leave her wholly at ease, for if she had encouraged Emerance to the point of asking her for herself, when she meant to deny him, she was clearly wrong according to her lowest ideal of herself; but if he believed she had encouraged him, and yet was so nerveless that he could not act upon his belief, she could only regard him with a pity close upon contempt. Her pitying contempt did not wholly exclude the remorse with which she began thinking the whole case over. Either she had or she had not encouraged him, and if she had she ought now to have discouraged him sharply, decisively. But had he been definite enough for this? If she had really left him to a sort of vague hope, was it because she was uncertain of his meaning? Had he led her on through her curiosity, tempted her to the uncandor of which she accused herself? Was it all a part, another phase of his temperamental experimenting? Had he been experimenting with her? The thought made Parthenope rebound where she lay in bed, as one does in a drowse-dream of having dropped from some height. It roused her to full waking, but it was of such comfort that now she could dismiss

all regret. She dismissed it so absolutely that she passed from it into a slumber in which she knew nothing more till she heard a knocking on her door. Her cousin Kelwyn excused it as his, saying that he would like her to drive over to the Shakers with him, and it was past eight o'clock.

XXIII

From the sleepless remnant of the night, which Parthenope had found so refreshing after the clearing of her conscience toward Emerance, Kelwyn had risen with as generous a resolution as ever filled the breast of a lecturer on historical sociology. At the very first step toward its fulfilment he met with an experience which was the first of his difficulties. Kite was not there to hitch up the horse for him, and when he asked for Raney or Albert, Mrs. Kite said they had both gone to the field with her husband. But she added, lightly, that the horse was in the barn, and she guessed Kelwyn could hitch it up all right. She guessed truly, and by the time Parthenope had finished the belated breakfast she had got for herself Kelwyn had been so expeditious that he was sitting in the carryall waiting for her at the door.

As she mounted beside him the two Kelwyn boys came running from the kitchen to say, in their usual order: "We don't want to go with you, papa. Arthur has give us the white horse."

"Yes, yes," their father said, absently; "given, not give."

"Arthur says give; Mrs. Kite says give," they defended themselves.

"I've no doubt," Kelwyn said. "But *you* mustn't. And don't try to ride him."

"No, we won't," they promised; and as Kelwyn drove off with Parthenope, who had tried, within the

bounds of truth, to magnify the gift which the boys had asked her to appreciate, after their evident failure with their father, Kelwyn added: "I'm not sure that I know which they promised not to do. If we stayed here much longer they would not have a grammatical principle uncorrupted. But fortunately we are not going to stay. We are going to go."

"Why, have the Shakers found that that last family won't do?" the girl asked, glad of the fresh morning air in a world where there were many things one could not approve of.

"They will do only too well," Kelwyn said, "and that makes the difficulty the greater. The whole matter is one that I should like to put before you, as Carry and I have been seeing it in the darkness of the night."

"Oh, do, Cousin Elmer! You know I always feel so honored when you talk to me as if I were grown up. And I will try my very best to *be* grown up."

"I want you to help me to be grown up, too, and I hope you won't mind my being a little prolix and perhaps repeating what you know already."

"Not at all; that's the only way I can help you."

This was not very consequent, and Kelwyn frowned a little for the inconsequence as he went on. "You know the plain and logical view of the matter, the legal position, would be to stand upon our rights. Perhaps, in the interest of society, we should not enable the Kites to remain where they could impose upon other long suffering and unoffending people."

"Yes," Parthenope assented, with bright intelligence.

"But it is just there where we have found ourselves weak, and where we have decided to incur the measure of guilt that lies in what I may call a self-indulgent self-sacrifice. We have been talking it over the whole

night, or what was left of the night, and we cannot bring ourselves to stand upon our rights. To put those people out would be to disgrace them before their neighbors, and cloud their future wherever the rumor of their disgrace followed them. I have realized more and more, from my last talk with Brother Jasper, that he would justify us in putting them out, not because they were unfit to keep the house for any one, but because they could not keep it to suit us, could not meet our tastes. This is the business view of it. I know that Elder Nathaniel and the Sisters feel differently, and that they truly regret what we have undergone; they have all said so, and they would approve our action understandingly, but Brother Jasper never would. To the last he would think we had been too particular, and he might even say so to justify himself for putting the Kites into the house at all. I don't believe he has been very wise in his selection of their unsuccessive successors, though he seems at last to have found the right family for us. Until the other day, when I forced him to it explicitly, he has never talked the matter over with Kite in my presence either because he is afraid of him or because he does not wholly approve of us. I don't like that in Brother Jasper, and I am going round to tell him so when I tell him that we have decided now, without further delay, to go out ourselves."

"I am sure you owe it to yourself, Cousin Elmer, to do so," Parthenope assented. But in listening to Kelwyn's statement her mind had wandered to the toleration with which Emerance had always spoken of the Kites, and it seemed as if she had inspired her cousin to say:

"I don't blame the Kites altogether, you understand. Carry and I have both come to the same conclusion

It's even a little pathetic about them in their ignorance, their want of domestic civilization. He believes she is a perfect housekeeper so thoroughly that she believes it herself. That is the hopeless phase of the case, as it is the pathetic phase. Besides, they are not without human, without humane feeling. Kite thinks he is the superior of that drunken Allson, and is qualified to advise him and his wife for their good; and you saw last night how ready they were to go to the help of Mrs. Ager when they thought she was in trouble."

"Yes; that is what complicates the matter," Parthenope said, and it seemed to her as if she were saying it in assent to Emerance as well as to Kelwyn.

"And now I am going to the Shakers' to have it out with Brother Jasper, and to make him go with me to the field again where Kite is working and have it out with *him*. Brother Jasper has got to listen while I tell Kite that we are not going to make him go, but are going ourselves, not because he cannot suit us, but because he can't suit anybody. I shall have at least that satisfaction."

"And I think you have a perfect right to it, Cousin Elmer," Parthenope commented, with a judicial air which was not impaired for Kelwyn by her laying her hand on his and pressing it with impulsive approval. He liked it the more because it did not seem alloyed by the doubt of his course which he had felt himself, and which his wife had expressed in arriving with him at their present decision. "The worst of it," he answered, with a sigh of disclaimer, "is that we don't know where to go. It's still a month or six weeks before we want to go back to town, and we haven't the least idea where to put in the time."

Parthenope hesitated, and a blush made its way

through the tan which covered her face to her cinnamon hair.

"The only place that I have seen yet," Kelwyn pursued, "is the one I saw with Carry the other day while you were off with Emerance. The place was charming, and the rooms were as many as we could ask; but they were stuffy and shabby, and the woman, though good-looking enough, was long, lank, and slatternly, and had drawn her hair up over her head and dyed the skull through it in spots!" But he broke away from the picture. "Part of my errand to the Shakers is to ask whether they don't know of some decent people who will take us in when we turn ourselves out into the street; for that is what it practically comes to. They certainly owe us as much as that. I don't know but I have a right to demand that *they* shall board us till we can find some place."

"Yes," Parthenope assented, provisionally. "You wouldn't like to keep house for yourselves?"

"Isn't that what we are and have been doing?" he asked, sarcastically.

"Then," she said, "I believe I know of something. It is a house that Mr. Emerance and I saw. I didn't suppose it could be had; but Mr. Emerance said last night that he had met the owner in the post-office, and he told him they were going to the seaside for August, and he wondered if you wouldn't like his house, for he heard you were not satisfied with the Kites. But I didn't know that Cousin Carry wanted the care of housekeeping, or even that you were going to leave the Kites—"

"Don't keep me waiting, Parthenope! What is it? Where is it? Housekeeping! We are prepared for *hotel*keeping, rather than stay where we are."

"Why, you remember that stone cottage round by

the pond, or dam, where those wood-colored mills are?"

"You don't mean that cottage where they can't agree whether to paint the ell red or green? Do you mean that we could get *that* cottage for the rest of the summer?"

"That is what Mr. Emerance said; but—"

"Get up!" Kelwyn called to his horse; he almost shouted, in fact; and he pulled so hard on one of the reins that the girl cried out in alarm:

"Are you trying to turn the wagon over, Cousin Elmer?"

"I'm trying to turn the road round."

"But that isn't the way to the Shakers'!"

"No; but it's the way to the stone cottage, and I'm going there as fast as this horse can crawl. Parthenope, you are an instrument of Providence, though you may never have suspected it. That stone cottage has dropped from heaven, and at your touch. I only hope no one else has taken it, or the people changed their minds."

"But wait, Cousin Elmer," she entreated, laying her hand on the reins. "You're not going to take it without Cousin Carry's seeing it?"

"Your seeing it will be enough. You know our wants quite as well as we do, and Caroline will trust your judgment."

In his wilfulness Kelwyn became almost gay, and the girl caught his spirit, so that when they came in sight of the cottage at a turn of the road she was laughing.

The owners of the cottage were out in its grounds, looking up at the ell as before, but at sight of the carryall at their front door they both came to it questioningly.

"Your place gone yet?" Kelwyn asked, with the jocoseness which in him was always racial rather than personal.

"No," the owner of the cottage said, in the same vein, "it seems to be here still. Professor Kelwyn? Thought it was you. Guess we know the young lady already. Won't you come in and look round? Hitch your horse for you?"

"No," Kelwyn said, alighting and helping Parthenope down. "He'll stand—whenever he gets the chance."

"Looks that way," the other assented. "Well, it's a great thing in a horse."

The wife took friendly possession of Parthenope, and followed her indoors while the men talked of terms in walking about the grounds.

"And there isn't an unpleasant room in the house," the wife said, proudly, when their tour of it had ended, and Parthenope had to own:

"No; there isn't, indeed. I think it's perfect, but my cousin will have to see it. I couldn't be responsible."

"No, of course not," the wife said, coming to the door with her. "She can have our girl, too."

"Well, he's taken it," her husband said, referring to Kelwyn. "Has *she?*"

"The same as, I guess," his wife humored him.

"He's going to paint the ell dark green."

"And she's going to paint it red."

They had their joke, and Parthenope praised the house, but cautioned Kelwyn that Mrs. Kelwyn, in justice to her, ought to see it.

"Have I the refusal till to-morrow?" he asked of the lady.

"Oh yes."

"Just drop a postal," the husband said, and Kelwyn got back into the carryall with Parthenope.

As he drove away, in high content with himself and the whole world, he said, "Now, I shall have courage to face the Shakers, and tell Brother Jasper what I have decided to do."

Parthenope looked her surprise at his seeming to have just come to a conclusion which she had thought his prime errand, and he went on:

"Of course I should have done it in any case, but having a roof to put over one's head beforehand makes a great difference. It gives one heart."

"Of course," she agreed; but it seemed to her that here was a point on which she ought to help Kelwyn clear his mind if she meant to be of the highest use to him. "I am glad you have that to fall back on." She added, tactfully: "A woman wouldn't have had the courage to take such a leap in the dark without it; I suppose that is where a man is different."

After a moment Kelwyn said, rather dryly, "I suppose so."

"I almost wish," she continued, with a light of the ideal in the face she turned on him, but a modest ideal expressing a willingness for instruction, "that you could have told them you were going out before you really knew of anything else."

"I think it quite enough as it is," Kelwyn said, not liking to have what was left of his magnanimous position minimized.

"Yes," Parthenope reflected. "And perhaps Cousin Carry may not like the house. There's that."

"I believe we can make sure of her liking it," Kelwyn said, in refusing the high consolation.

But the chance of her not liking the house haunted his consciousness, and reinforced his pride of self-

indulgent self-sacrifice when it came to his announcement of it. He had to suffer the disappointment of not finding Brother Jasper at the office; there was no one there but Elder Nathaniel, with the two Office Sisters. They told him that Brother Jasper had gone to the field where Kite was working to meet the referees who were to value his crops before he could be put out of the place.

"The Family will have to take them at the referees' valuation," Elder Nathaniel said, with a dejection which the Sisters mutely shared. "And we wish to tell you again how greatly we regret the inconvenience you have suffered; and desire you to understand that our share of it is comparatively little. We would be pleased to do more if we could."

"Yee, we would," the Office Sisters united with the Elder. "We all would."

"Thank you," Kelwyn said, with a severity which was meant less to reproach them than to strengthen himself in his high purpose. "I have come to relieve you even of that part. My wife and I have decided not to put you to any further trouble, but to end the whole matter by going out ourselves and leaving the Kites in possession."

"I have been afraid it might come to that," Elder Nathaniel sadly admitted, without that explicit applause of Kelwyn's decision which he certainly thought it merited.

The Sisters merely looked their distress, and while the men talked the matter over in detail they seemed glad to turn from it and enter into such gossip with Parthenope as they thought harmless.

"It seems as if a great many were going to the Centennial," Saranna said. "Some of our Canbury Family are going, and the storekeeper in the village

at the depot is taking his wife. We did hear that the folks in the stone cottage were going, too, if they could let their house right away."

As her cousin Kelwyn had not thought fit to say that he expected to take the house, Parthenope did not feel warranted in doing so, though her higher ideal of truth demanded it of her. She said nothing, and Sister Saranna went on, placidly: "The teacher over at the school where Friend Caroline said you saw the exercises went this morning by the first train—her and the young woman on the school committee. They passed here early, and Friend Emerance got into their carryall with them and went to the depot. Did you hear that they were going to the Centennial together?"

"No," Parthenope answered, briefly; and through a tumult of emotions and conjectures that whirled round her she heard Kelwyn saying as from a distance:

"Then I will let you take the horse and drive on home, Parthenope, and I will walk over after I have seen Kite. Elder Nathaniel is going to show me where to find him. You can tell Carry what we have done."

"Very well, Cousin Elmer," she answered, in her remoteness.

The light which Sister Saranna's news had thrown upon Emerance's relation to herself was a sort of baleful dazzle which showed the facts but not the meaning of the facts. Its searching glare multiplied the whole question in the shape of doubts, of suspicions, which tormented and disgraced her before herself. Had he been, then, amusing himself with her? Had he dared to remain in some such uncertainty regarding her as she had remained in regarding him? Had he played off in his mind his preference for the school-teacher against his preference for her, and had

the school-teacher won? If he had been opener, her course would have been clear. Even if he had cared most for her, it would have been in accordance with the canons of the high romance to give him up to that girl; and although she loved him herself, to deny her love until she died of it. But Parthenope was not convinced that she loved him, or would have, if he asked her, and she felt that as the affair stood he had, to formulate the vulgar fact vulgarly, been flirting with them both, in an insensibility to her superiority which was a part of his inferiority. She had to put it to herself as grossly as this before she could seize the reality and begin to take thought for action. But when she asked herself what she should do she felt stricken, wounded, lamed to helplessness. Like every other woman, since love began, to whom the like had happened, she could do nothing but stand still and take the blows of destiny, without returning them, till she sank under them. But she could not believe that anything so out of keeping with her character and experience could really happen to her.

XXIV

Parthenope found Mrs. Kelwyn, in a pause of her packing, refreshing herself with an untimely cup of tea, which she seemed to be drinking merely because Mrs. Kite had offered to make it for her, and which she praised for its unexpected goodness. "It's this sort of thing that makes it so distressing to leave them. Whether we turn ourselves out or them out, we disgrace them in their neighbors' eyes. I have realized that more and more, and when the incapable creature makes one of her hopeless efforts to please I lose all resentment and wish we could stay. It isn't such a simple matter! Nothing seems very simple, even the simplest thing. And that brings me to the point, Parthenope. There's something I want to speak to you about, but I've been so distracted that I'm afraid I've put it off rather selfishly."

"Yes," the girl spiritlessly suggested, from the other side of the table.

"Is there anything between you and Mr. Emerance?"

"No," Parthenope answered, as spiritlessly as before.

"Well, so far, so good," Mrs. Kelwyn said, with an air of strict sequence. "Then I need say nothing about it. I was afraid you were allowing yourself to become interested in him, and such a thing would have been very unfortunate. I ought to have warned you before, but in the confusion here, the perfect topsy-

turviness of all our ideas, I haven't been able to bring my mind to bear upon it. You know yourself, Parthenope, that anything serious would be quite out of the question. The very fact that he was so different from ourselves in what Mr. Kelwyn calls his civilization had made me feel easier, but it doesn't excuse me. If he had been a young man of your own class I certainly should have objected to your being about with him so much at all hours"—she helplessly flowed into the saying—"of the day and night."

At another time Parthenope might have resented this way of putting it, but now she only said, lifelessly, "I understand."

The want of opposition seemed to weaken Mrs. Kelwyn in her position. "Not that young people, in these picnicking and camping times, don't throw off a good many social trammels, and it's quite proper and harmless. With Mr. Emerance, too, I felt that his very want of any experience like your own added to the propriety. But I don't think I have considered you enough in the matter, and I blame myself very much. I suppose we may both acknowledge that there is something very attractive about him. He is cultivated, in a certain way, and he has the good manners that come from a good heart. Though he seems such a dreamer, he is the most practical and efficient person I ever saw. And he is certainly very good-looking. You must acknowledge that yourself, Parthenope."

"Oh yes," the girl owned, "very handsome, indeed."

"I shouldn't really have wondered if you *had* become interested in him; I shouldn't have been at all surprised if there had been something between you."

"But there isn't."

"Yes; I know that, and I am glad you are not in-

terested in him at all in that way." Parthenope did not respond, and Mrs. Kelwyn went on as if less confident of her ground. "You are very much his superior in every respect."

"I don't know," the girl said, coldly. "He has read quite as much as I have, and he has thought in directions where I haven't thought at all."

"I like your being impartial, but you must be just even to yourself, no matter how generous you feel like being. I don't suppose he has the least notion of art?"

"None that I know of."

"And that is what I mean by your superiority. I take that merely as a type. He is utterly wanting on the æsthetic side. I don't suppose he has the least idea how perfectly you are dressed; how simply and yet how beautifully. And, though he has the good manners that come from a good heart, as I say, he hasn't the least notion of society as we know it."

"No."

"Well," Mrs. Kelwyn said, somewhat baffled by Parthenope's acquiescences, "you see that it would never have done in the world. I don't imagine, if there *had* been anything between you, that your aunt Julia would have objected; she never objects to anything you do. But that has made my responsibility all the greater, don't you see? And I have felt my responsibility toward *him* as well as toward *you*. We have both got to confess that he has acted in everything with the most perfect delicacy. I think his behavior in every respect has been worthy of the highest ideal of a gentleman. But things like that have made me anxious not to let the affair go too far with him. I have been afraid that he was interested in you, and that he would feel it more than you realized when you had to tell him that there

was no hope for him." Parthenope was silent, and Mrs. Kelwyn added, almost interrogatively: "As you certainly would. You couldn't have forgiven yourself for that. And that was what made me so anxious, all round."

"There was no occasion for anxiety, Cousin Carry," Parthenope replied, coldly. "Mr. Emerance has been consoling himself against the chances."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—I mean—that he has gone to the Centennial with that—that school-teacher," Parthenope answered.

"And you mean—you mean—that there is something between them?"

"I don't mean anything but what I say."

"But how do you know? Who told you?"

"Sister Saranna."

"This morning?"

Parthenope nodded.

"But, Parthenope, how did Sister Saranna know it?"

"She saw him getting into the wagon at the Office with her and that committee-girl."

"But, Parthenope, that may not mean anything. People of that sort could go to the Centennial on the same train, and still—and still—" Mrs. Kelwyn felt that she was failing to make out her case, and more remotely that she had no reason for trying to console her cousin under the circumstances, if she was glad that there was nothing between her and Emerance.

Parthenope turned upon her. "You seemed to think his being about with *me* meant something — meant something on his part."

"Yes, but that was very different."

"It was not the least different. It was exactly the same thing. But it doesn't matter. It is all for the

best, and it releases you from the responsibility which you dread so much."

"I don't understand. Had you any reason to suppose that he was interested in the school-teacher? She is certainly very pretty. But has he been"—the words framed themselves on Mrs. Kelwyn's involuntary lips—"going with her?"

"Don't be country, Cousin Carry. If he was 'going with' *me* he may have been 'going with' *her*, too."

"That is true. But if you have never been interested in him, she may not have been, either." Mrs. Kelwyn felt this a triumph of logic, almost a syllogism. "Don't you see that it proves nothing?" she pursued.

"Cousin Carry, do you think I have no sense or no feeling?" Parthenope turned away and was, as she felt, sweeping from the room, when she was arrested by something she saw through the window.

"What is it?" Mrs. Kelwyn demanded, from where she still sat at the table.

"Nothing. Cousin Elmer is coming." She spoke now in a wholly different note.

"Is Brother Jasper with him? I hope—"

"It isn't Jasper. You can look for yourself," and now Parthenope really swept from the room, and Mrs. Kelwyn heard her shutting her door before she made her own way to the window.

She saw her husband coming forward at a conversational pace, and with him was Emerance, sharing a discussion which seemed so far removed, to the eyes at least, from the pressing actualities of life that she provisionally lost all patience with them both. She hurried down to the door, and met them in time to hear Kelwyn saying, "Yes, that is an admirable subject, but everything, as you have realized, depends upon the treatment."

She took no notice of her husband in challenging his companion, "Why, Mr. Emerance, I thought you had gone to the Centennial!"

"Oh no! I did intend to go to Boston this morning, but I found a letter at the post-office in the village which decided me to put off my whole trip for a week or two; and Mr. Kelwyn has let me come back with him."

Mrs. Kelwyn stared at her husband with a severity which he met with a tone of comradery for Emerance, full of greater liking than he usually allowed himself to express. "Mr. Emerance has put it so succinctly that I needn't explain that his object in returning is to help us pack and get off. He thinks we can't manage without him."

Mrs. Kelwyn's mind reverted to the main point, on which it had been turning before flying off at a tangent to Parthenope and Emerance. "And you are really going?"

"Not unless you are, my dear," Kelwyn answered, with sarcasm. "Didn't you understand that I had gone to see Kite and arrange the matter with him once and for all?"

"Oh yes, but—"

"Well, that's what I've done, and quite amicably, though he had his misgivings when I gave up every point to him; I might say he had his suspicions. But he seemed to overcome them, and I think we are going to part friends. I don't believe we can part too soon, though, with all this 'changin' faces,' as Brother Jasper calls it."

"No, probably not," Mrs. Kelwyn consented, with a sigh of lingering reluctance. "Well, now we mustn't lose any time. Fortunately we are pretty well packed already."

"That will disappoint Mr. Emerance. But you could let him cord a few trunks, couldn't you? If you can't, he has a notion of looking up transportation for us. You know we can't get away without a good-sized vehicle to carry us and our things. If those gypsies would turn up again we might hire their van."

At the sound of talking, which might or might not concern her, Mrs. Kite had come to her door, and she now hospitably joined in the question. "I don't believe but what you could get a team to the village. There's an express that could take you in two trips. I'm *real* sorry you feel you got to go. Mr. Kite and me been talkin' it all over, and I don't believe but what we could make out together somehow."

"Well," Kelwyn said, in acceptance of her friendly feeling, "Mr. Kite and I have been talking it over since, and he agrees with me that we had perhaps better part if I've engaged other quarters. Oh, by the way," he turned to his wife, "I found out that the stone cottage we all liked so much was to be had, and I saw it with Parthenope this morning. I said I would take it if you approved."

"Really, Elmer, you might have known I would simply jump at it!"

"Well, I'll drop a postal to them at once—"

"No, that won't do," his wife said, with the eagerness of women not to let slip the chance which they might have been willing to renounce. "Some one else might—"

"Mrs. Kelwyn," Emerance interposed, "let me go over and tell them that you are coming?"

"Well, the hoss *ain't* unhitched yet," Mrs. Kite intervened, with impartiality. "I guess he's right there in the barn, where Miss Brook left him not more'n half ar hour ago. She *was* sayin' something about

goin' to the village after some canned goods for dinner, though I don't believe but what we could get along without."

"Perhaps Miss Brook will come with me," Emerance suggested, "and we can combine the stone cottage and the canned goods and the transportation in one errand."

"Capital!" Kelwyn agreed. "Our lease of the cottage will come more authoritatively from one of the family than even from a friend of the family. Where is Parthenope? Is she in the house?" He made a start toward the door, but faltered, aware for the first time of his wife frowning significantly at him.

"*I* will go, Elmer," she said, sternly, and over her shoulder she showed him the same mystifying front that she had bent on him.

Whatever the arts or reasons she used to compel the appearance of the girl, they succeeded, and Parthenope appeared at the door without more delay than sufficed her to have had the situation placed attractively before her.

"How do you do?" Emerance called to her face, which lighted up only provisionally; and as if he assumed that she was there to accompany him on his errand, he added, "Well, I'll go and get the horse."

XXV

The morning had not yet got so far toward noon as to have lost the freshness in which the world renews itself every day in summer with something like the joy of spring. The year was as if in its second youth, and had some of those charms of maturity which add to the beauty of that renascence. There were not so many birds singing as there would have been at the same hour in June; but the air was as clear and bright, and from the stubble of a piece of the Shakers' wheat the quails were calling, not with the amorous entreaty of their mating-time, but with the tender anxiety of parental love. At one point a mother-quail, which seemed to have been waiting for the opportunity to risk the lives of all her chickens at once, scuttled with them across the road through the thick dust almost under the horse's feet.

"Ah," Emerance said, "that was a narrow escape."

"You're sure it *was* an escape?" Parthenope looked over her shoulder at the road, which had become invisible in the dust.

"I didn't count them, but I think so." He leaned back in the carryall seat and drew a deep breath. "This is better than going to the Centennial."

"Is it? I thought you wished to go."

"I did and I didn't. I can go later. But it's so good to be driving along such a road, such a day as this, that I feel as if I had made an escape. That's why I'm so sure those quails got safely away."

Parthenope would not smile, though she knew that he expected it. She said, "I hope this is an escape, too."

"You mean getting away from the Kites? I was afraid," he said, seriously, "that Mrs. Kelwyn might be tempted to try staying on. It's not my business, but I've seen more and more that it wouldn't do."

"You haven't always shown it. You have seemed to think we were wronging them."

"Not after you had given them a full trial. I didn't want you to have a bad conscience."

"Thank you. I don't know that you've prevented that. My cousin thinks that they will feel disgraced before their friends as much by our going as by our turning them out."

"Oh, no they won't. They remain in possession of the field, and so the victory is theirs. They will console themselves."

"Mr. Emerance," she said, severely, "sometimes I think you are really a cynic; you seem to have so little consideration for others."

"Do I? I should be sorry to think that. I don't pity the Kites a great deal, for I don't believe they deserve it, and I don't want them to; but when have I seemed wanting in consideration for any others?"

"Do you wish me to say?"

"I do, indeed."

Parthenope gave herself time for reflection. She thought of doing an ideal thing, of performing an act of self-sacrifice which would cost her more than she had even allowed to herself that it would. Whether she was interested in Mr. Emerance herself or not, perhaps for the very reason that she was interested, if she was, it was her duty to remind him that he owed a duty to another whom he had given reason to think he was

interested in her. This act must be performed heroically, and yet it must be performed delicately, and after reflection that would take the quality of rashness from it and leave her with no regret on her own account; the sublimity must not be marred by any absurdity; with whatever secret pain, it must be performed with the superiority of a witness of conduct on a level below her own. Yet she found herself, after due reflection, saying, rashly, personally, and, as it sounded to her, spitefully: "Don't you think Miss Nichols has a right to think you've been inconsiderate?" She tried to look steadily at him, but failed a little before his steady stare.

"Miss Nichols? How? Why?"

"Your leaving her so abruptly, after you had promised to go with her and her friend to the Centennial?"

Since she must be plain, Parthenope spared herself nothing, and she was strengthened for the effort by her rising anger with Emerance. She had turned pale with it, and she reddened with resentment when for first answer he laughed aloud, and then she waited indignantly for him to account for himself.

"I don't think she will be disappointed. Or not, after she reaches Boston. I was only going as far as Boston, at any rate, and she was to meet some one there who would console her for any desertion of mine. He and his sister are going with her and her friend to Philadelphia at once, and I had expected to follow next week."

Parthenope was silent, while he went on to explain the whole case with an increasing recognition of the motive from which she had spoken.

He carried this so far that at last she said, in bitter confusion: "Don't let us speak of it any more. I had no business— And I beg your pardon."

"Oh, but if I could only tell you how much I value your having spoken—"

"But you can't, you mustn't, and unless you want me to detest you—"

He stopped, and they drove on for what seemed the promise of indefinite silence.

At last he said, with an effort to command their lost cheerfulness, and a smile that was rueful enough, "And you won't let me tell you what the letter was that turned me back?"

She consented, with an "Oh yes" so listless that it might well have discouraged a man less full of his object. But Emerance seemed to find sufficient incentive in it.

He brightened as he began. "It was from an actor —not the one who has let me learn the theatre from him, so far as I know it, but a friend of his, a younger man, who is looking for a play. My friend showed mine to him in the rough draft I had sent him, and he likes it. He likes it with enthusiasm; that is their way when they like a thing at all, though it doesn't mean that they will take it. But this one wants to see me and talk it over, and he has proposed coming up here for Sunday — he's in New York now — and, of course, I couldn't miss such a chance."

He seemed to refer the point to Parthenope, and she said, abstractedly, "No."

"It will be more than the Centennial to me," Emerance continued, "though I needn't miss that, either, and do more to decide my future. In fact, if he takes my play my future is already decided."

He clearly expected some response of interest and sympathy, and Parthenope could not withhold it. "You ought to be very happy." But she spoke coldly.

"Oh, I am. This chance has cleared up a lot of

things. You can't imagine what a light it has thrown on them." As if he had not noticed her coldness, he talked on so joyously and so full of his theme that he forgot their errand, and he would have driven past the stone cottage, when they came to it, if she had not laid her hand on the reins. "What is it?" he asked, and then returned to his mission, with a laugh at himself and an "Oh! Somebody else might have got the place if you hadn't stopped me."

The husband and wife were sitting on the cottage steps, and the man came forward to the gate. "*Thought* you might be along, some of you. Well, I suppose you don't want my place," he added, ironically. "Paint the ell part any color you please," he suggested.

Emerance left the answer to Parthenope. "Yes, we want it, and the question is how soon can we have it."

"To-morrow do?"

"We didn't quite expect it to-day," she answered, in his humor.

"All right. To-morrow it is, then. That so?" he referred to the lady who now came to the gate, too.

"To-morrow afternoon," she stipulated. "You're sure your cousin will be satisfied without seeing it herself?"

"Oh, she will trust my report," Parthenope answered, from the distance that persisted in putting itself between her and the actualities of life, where she was remotely dramatizing a scene of final character with Emerance, and defining her position in regard to his affairs with a distinctness which she felt had been wanting to it.

In the midst of this she heard him suggesting an interest very alien to it. "There's a question of transportation," he said to the man, "that I was to consult

you about. Do you know where Professor Kelwyn could get a two-horse team to move his things over? He doesn't want to make more than one trip of it."

"I see," the man said, intelligently, but without coming further to the rescue.

His wife said, "I don't believe but what Benson could move them." She referred her belief to her husband, who agreed.

"Guess you're right—for once. Do you know Benson?" he queried of the pair before him.

Parthenope left Emerance to say, "I'm afraid we don't know where he lives, anyway."

"Well, that's all right," the owner of the cottage said. "You want to take the first turn to the left on the way to the Shakers, and, when you come to a barn with a wind-pump on it, that's Benson's. Guess you'll find him there about now."

Emerance drove to the Benson place without attempting to return to the subject which their business had interrupted. In front of the barn, under the shade of an elm a little at one side, they saw a handsome two-horse wagon, with wheels picked out in black and yellow; looking closer, they saw a man lying on his back under the wagon-bed, whistling thoughtfully and bestowing some touches of restoration where the paint had been chipped off.

At Emerance's friendly hail he came out, and when he stood up he proved a tall, gaunt man, with a plastering of short, red beard on his face and a sort of lame wink.

He listened to the errand which Emerance said had brought them, and then he asked, "You the folks been staying in the old Family house over to the Shakers?"

"Partly," Emerance admitted. "I've been a guest

on sufferance, but Miss Brook is one of Professor Kelwyn's family."

Mr. Benson took Parthenope's name for an introduction and offered his hand, from which he first wiped a little paint on his overalls. "How d'ye do? They say them Shakers believe they're livin' the angelic life, as they call it, right here and now; and I guess they *are* pretty good sort of folks. And some of 'em look ready to go, if they ain't there already. I tell my wife, when I see one them Shaker ladies, I seem to feel as if she was all laid out for buryin'. They're all finished up so, you know, round the neck"—he put his hand to his own throat—"and they keep themselves so neat lookin'." Having freed his mind of the observation, he took up the business in hand, languidly: "I guess I can move ye. When d'you want I should come?"

"To-morrow afternoon," Emerance said.

Mr. Benson turned and ran a critical eye over his wagon. "I been paintin' her up some. But I guess she'll be dry by to-morrow afternoon. Yes, I'll be round about three o'clock, if that 'll do ye."

"Terrible!" Parthenope said, as they drove away.

"Yes," Emerance admitted; "it was rather ghastly. But in town we forget what a large part death plays in the social interests in the country. A funeral is a prized event, and the particulars are talked over to the least detail for weeks, as often as friends of the family meet or go to the village for the exchange of gossip. We try to pass death over and hush it up with flowers, but they cherish its acquaintance, and value themselves on every step they see a neighbor taking toward it."

"It's ghoulish."

"I don't think it's ghoulish. It's a remnant of the strength of the old Puritan days when people faced not

only death but damnation—when they were willing to be damned for the glory of God."

It had always surprised Parthenope a little when Emerance ventured to differ with her, yet he differed, she had to realize, rather often. In some things she could put him down, but on grounds like this she felt her inadequacy. She said, wilfully: "Then it's about the only remnant of Puritanism left them in *this* neighborhood. I think they're all abominable."

"You've seen the worst among them, but I think you've seen some good things in the worst. They're not up to the moral level of the Shakers, who have the immediate and instant help of one another in their goodness, but the average life here is good, and it's not affected by the intimate knowledge of evil around it; the sort of knowledge people don't have in towns, and which would be depraving here if it were not guarded by the principles inherited from the past. If Puritanism was false in doctrine, as we both think, it was true in life, and it's as true now as ever."

When Emerance talked in this way his tone took on something magisterial, and Parthenope liked it, though it quelled her. Still, she would not yield to him till she had tried getting him on other ground by indirection, and now she said from her elevation, "I suppose your play is to celebrate country people, then."

"If you mean their real character, yes, it is; but I don't flatter them."

"Oh, then you haven't got a funeral in?"

Emerance frowned at what he might very well have felt an impertinent and wanton thrust. Then his brow cleared and his whole face brightened as with a sudden inspiration. "That would be great! And it could be staged wonderfully—"

She burst out upon him. "It would be sacrilegious.

Really, I wonder at you, Mr. Emerance. To have a funeral on the stage! It would be horrible!"

"There's one in *Hamlet*," he rejoined, steadily, and with a readiness that took her breath. "But I wouldn't have a graveyard scene, not the actual interment; just a country parlor, with the people seen, say, through an open door, sitting in rows and singing. Perhaps a girl at the melodeon. It could be made very effective."

"And you are really going to have it?"

"No. Or not in this play. The scheme wouldn't include it. But I shall certainly think the scene over for another play. I see a long series stretching out before me. Thank you for suggesting it."

"I didn't mean to suggest it, and your thanks don't console me for having put such an idea into your head."

They both perceived at this point that the horse had come to a stop, and then they saw that from force of habit he had come to a stop in front of the Office at the Shakers.

Sister Saranna showed herself at the door. "Won't you come in?" she called to them where they sat dazed in their wagon. "Why, Friend Emerance, I thought you had gone to the Centennial!"

He looked round at Parthenope for some motion on her part to alight; as she made none he briefly explained, without giving the nature of the business that had made him change his plans. But what he said seemed to suffice Sister Saranna. She smiled gently upon them both, and said she thought it was he when she saw them through the window; they appeared so natural, there, coming together.

Parthenope, as if this natural appearance needed excuse, said that they had been to the stone cottage to engage it, and to engage a wagon to take their things, and they were all going to move on the morrow. But

she ended with a sort of disdain for the elaboration of her excuse, which was lost upon the Shakeress. She, it seemed, had no thought but for the annoyance of the Kelwyns, which was now ending in their banishment, and for the grief of the Family at their going. "Oh, we sha'n't be so far away, Sister Saranna," the girl consoled her. "We will come every Sunday to meeting, and as often to see you as you'll let us."

"But you won't seem like part of the Family any more," she lamented.

"Well, it can't be helped, for now we really are going. Good-bye! Say good-bye to all the Sisters!"

Even at this hint Emerance did not start, and Parthenope had to say to him: "I think we had better go on, Mr. Emerance. I shall have to help my cousin get lunch, and there's a great deal of packing to do yet."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he said, chirruping to the horse. "I was just thinking," and he called his farewell in turn to Sister Saranna.

XXVI

After helping Parthenope help get luncheon, Emerance helped her help get supper, Mrs. Kite sitting by throughout with the effect of being helped. "Well, it seems like old times to have you two out here together workin' away just the way you done first off." After reflection, she added: "I don't see why we couldn't get along together, after all. But maybe it wouldn't be for the best. Land knows, we shall *miss* you bad enough!"

They let her begin inuring herself to the separation by washing the supper dishes alone. Emerance sat with Kelwyn talking under the elm-tree in the sweet, dry summer evening, while Parthenope bore her part in reconciling the boys first to their baths and then to their beds. She chased them in their nightgowns round the old Family meeting-room, and then left them to their dreams after tiding them over a gloomy moment of prayer.

When she came out to the threshold she had two books in her hand. "These ought to go back to the Allsons," she said. "I don't know how we overlooked them in the packing."

"I'll take them," Emerance offered, getting to his feet from his place on the grass and coming for them. She did not give them up to him, or so quickly but he could say, "Why shouldn't we *both* take them?"

"Well," she temporized, rather than consented.

"We're both very tired," he suggested, "but we could

drive, you know. The horse wouldn't like anything better."

"He's tired, too, I'm afraid." She continued: "If it wouldn't be much farther round by the village, we could get some things at the store that my cousin wants to begin housekeeping with in the stone cottage. She wants a yeast-cake."

She seemed to refer the point to Kelwyn, who said, gravely, "If it is a question of a yeast-cake, I don't think it would be a great way round."

"Very well," she said, but Emerance had not waited for her to say that.

He returned with the carryall, while Mrs. Kelwyn, who had overheard part of the parley from the window overhead, called down some additional commissions.

She did not need the things immediately, but if Parthenope was bent upon a drive with Emerance, which she did not approve of, she felt that a mere yeast-cake was too barefaced.

They took the Allsons in on their way to the village, and found them, in the interval between two of the man's sprees, the image of a happy family. He was smoking where he lay on the ground near the door, and Mrs. Allson was sitting on the threshold, with her children, corrected from their play by the approach of company, about her, and her baby in her lap asleep. She made the eldest girl take the books, and she said, "Well, I'm real sorry to have you go, and I guess the whole neighborhood 'll be."

"We're not going far off," Parthenope said. "We shall be coming to borrow more books of you."

"So do. We shall be glad to have you. Want to take any now?"

"Not now. There isn't time. We're going on to the village, and it's getting late."

Parthenope shook hands with the woman, and, after a hesitation, with her husband, who desisted from his talk with Emerance about crops. He had been giving it as his opinion that it would do more for the neighborhood if the Shakers raised something besides timber. So much woods kept a place back and made a hiding for tramps, besides looking so lonesome. "Well," he said, hospitably, to Parthenope, "you must come over and see the woman."

"Yes, call again," his wife joined with him, as Emerance helped the girl into the carryall.

"We seem to be leaving friends everywhere," Parthenope said, with a laugh. "We are universal favorites."

"Yes, you are apparently," the young man answered, but in a way as if he had not liked her laughing.

His tone provoked her to say, "Perhaps I ought to be more respectful, if you are going to put the Allsons into a play."

"Oh, I don't know that I am," he said, and, though she was vexed with his sensitiveness, she addressed herself to soothing his peasant-pride, as she called it to herself. The wound, if there was any, had not gone deep, and he accepted the kindly things she found to say of the Allsons as sufficient atonement to himself. They had both forgotten them by the time her shopping was done, and she remounted with him in the carryall, ready for an amicable discussion as to which way they should keep on to the village, whether by the Shakers or by a longer way and pleasanter road which the moonlight seemed to justify them in taking. They had a polite difficulty as to which should yield, where neither really cared, and the horse settled the point for them by taking the shorter road by the Shakers. They com-

promised with him, if they had a preference, by letting him walk, and prolonging the drive in that way.

Parthenope was the first to begin. "I don't believe I have made you feel how glad I am that your play is going to have a chance. Now, you must tell me all about it, and just how much of a chance it has. Isn't it very uncommon to have an actor willing to talk it over with you?"

"It's uncommon with me," he said. "It's more to me than I could make you understand. It has settled one point effectually. If there is any such hope as there seems for me as a dramatist, I should never think of being an actor."

"I'm awfully glad to hear you say that, Mr. Emerance. Of course, it's your own affair, but none of us have liked the notion of the stage for you. Perhaps you think we had no business to talk you over."

"I like your making it your business. But I've had my revenge, if I was wronged by your talking me over; I've been thinking *you* over."

"And what did you think of us—from your point of view? Be candid! I should really like to know."

"Collectively or individually?" he met her playfulness.

"Now you're trying to shirk, or at least to temporize. Treat us any way you like."

"Well, individually, then. And I'll begin with you."

"No, *not* with me, decidedly!"

"But I've begun already."

"Well, then, my faults first, if you have the courage."

"Oh, I have the courage. That actor's letter has given me courage for anything to-day. I shouldn't be afraid to tell you of your faults, if you had any."

"Now, *that* is a shirk."

"He's given me hope that I couldn't have imagined having," he waived her point. "He's provided such a magnificent future for me that all my groping past and hesitating present have been redeemed by him."

"Aren't you rather figurative, Mr. Emerance, for a dramatist?"

"I wish I could believe you wanted me to be less so! Parthenope," he said, and at this first sound of her name from his lips she felt a wild, glad thrilling, which she had to summon all her moral, social, and psychological forces to quell, "don't you know what I mean? Don't you know that this new hope of mine would be nothing if it were not the hope of *you*?" She was dumb past all her expectation and resolution, and he rushed on: "You *must* know that I care for you, and that the dearest wish of my life— You have been so good to me, so trustful of me, and hopeful for me that I've come to think—to think that you cared for me, too. Tell me I'm not wrong!"

He had possessed himself of her hands, which he had dropped the reins to seize, with a faith in the horse's resources of self-guidance which it justified in continuing on at the same pace as when driven, and swerving neither to the right nor the left in the white moonlight.

Parthenope let him keep her hands; it was somehow so sweet, for the appreciable instant before she began, as if struggling from some far trance: "Mr. Emerance, I'm sorry you've said this; very, very sorry," and then she was strangely at the end of her words, and he had to prompt her.

"But surely you must have thought I cared for you?"

"If I did I was very wrong to let you. I blame my-

self, oh, very much. I've let my selfish pleasure in your society—it *has* been pleasant—blind me to what I ought to have seen—if you say I ought."

"Ah, I don't say it!" he said.

"No, no! You are too generous. But you think it; yes, you have a right to think it. I can see that now, when it's too late. But, indeed, it can never be."

Whether there was or not something indefinite, or only something withheld in her tone, he asked, "If there is some one else—"

"Oh, no! Never! You mustn't think it's that. But I can live my life more usefully by myself."

"Do you say that," he persisted, "to save me from thinking myself unworthy—"

"Don't!" she entreated, "or I can't forgive myself," and now he was silent, and she could go on in such haphazard phrases as offered themselves. "We are too unlike—unlike in our ideals. I don't mean yours are not better, higher than mine. But we've been brought up in such different worlds we never should understand each other. I should always be unjust to you."

"Do you mean my experimenting, as you call it? That's over, now."

"No, no. It isn't that."

"I know," he said, "that my world hasn't been like yours. Our traditions are different, but I hope not our principles. I've tried to make the most of myself, and not selfishly, always—"

"*Oh,* Mr. Emerance!"

"Ever since I first saw you, Parthenope— But I mustn't call you so!"

"Oh yes. What does it matter now?" she consented, desolately.

"*You* have been my ideal. It isn't your beauty

alone, but I love your beauty. I liked your self-reliance, even when I thought you were wrong. It charmed me. And I liked your absolute truth. That was charming, too. But what is the use, now?"

"I ought to hear anything you wish to say. You have the right to say anything to me."

"That's your justice. Your justice was what took me most of all."

There was something intoxicating in his praises, but if she refused him she must refuse them. "You don't know me. I'm not what you think. But you, you are a poet; you have imagination; you *live* in the ideal. Yes, I saw that from the first. You will succeed; you will be great, and you will be glad that you were not clogged with me."

"I can never be anything without you—never anything but a dreamer and experimenter, a mere empiricist."

Parthenope was not sure that she knew what this meant; the word was strange to her, but she understood a self-reproach from it which she must not suffer in him. "No," she began.

He would not heed her protest. "But you, you could make up for all my shortcomings. You could make a man of me—any sort of man you wanted."

"It's very sweet of you to say that, and I ought to be proud. I ought to be grateful, and I am. But it all comes to nothing if I have not the feeling I ought to have."

"But perhaps you have, Parthenope. Can't we reason it out together?"

"No; if I could reason about it I'm sure I shouldn't have it."

"That seems very strange: that reason can have nothing to do with the highest and humanest thing in

the world. If you could give yourself time to look into your feelings—"

"No. If I cared for you I should know it without looking into my feelings, and it would be absurd to reason about it."

This silenced him. "Well," he said, at last, "that ends it, I suppose. Get up," he said to the old horse, which had come to a stand unbidden, with a yearning twist of his head toward the Office of the Shakers, before which they found themselves pausing. The windows were dark, but those of one of the houses on the other hand were bright, and as they started on a burst of singing in one of the weird, sad Shaker tunes followed them from it. He said, with a bitterness that went to her heart, "*They've* got rid of it all."

Parthenope suddenly realized it: the Shakers had got rid of love, and all that came of it. She had never meant to do that. She was rather vague about it, as cultivated girls often are; she had always expected to be married when she met her ideal; but there would be time enough. Now, however, it seemed to her that she had been very cruel, and her soul bowed in pity over the man who had offered her his love. She could not deny to herself that what had happened was something she ought to have expected; she knew very well that there had been moments when she had thought it would be best for it to come to this, if only it might well be over with. But it was not well over with as it ought logically to have been; it was very ill over with.

She imagined his anguish from her own pain and with some sense of the mortification a man must experience, even in the best conditions, at a woman's refusal. She had sometimes fancied that a refusal could be made with expressions that would render it almost flatteringly acceptable; but now she realized that it

never could be so. It must always be disappointment and humiliation; and she had inflicted these upon a man whose goodness she owned as greater than that of any man she had yet known; a generous spirit, full of ambition and the power that the future would turn into success. His very consciousness of this must add to his shame. She wished he would say something; in the time before the word had come into use she suggested his saying something, but her hypnotic forces failed. The moment came when she could bear it no longer, and as they passed into the shadow of the woods that darkened on each side of the road before they reached home she put out her hand on his that lay listlessly holding the reins on his knee. She wished to be appealing and consoling, and she could only say, "I am sorry for it."

He answered in terms which she felt her atonement did not justify, but which she would not allow herself to resent, "Are you, dearest?" At the same time he put his right hand on hers and held it between his two.

She did not try to take it away, and it trembled there as she tried to explain. "Don't you see that if I— It would only be from pity, and—"

"Pity would be good enough for me," he answered, and his humility seemed the crowning effect of his magnanimity.

"Oh, but it oughtn't to be," she instructed him. "It would make it such an unequal thing. You wanted me to reason about it, and now I will, for that is your due. Yes, I owe you that. I don't want you to regret me; I would rather you would think I was weak than heartless. Don't you believe I understand you?"

She could not say, "How you feel," but perhaps he knew what she meant.

"Don't you think every one ought to marry their ideal?"

"You are my ideal," he said, and he took the reins into his right hand that he might keep the better hold of hers in his left. It was absurd, and it was distracting; but, if she was to make atonement to him, it could not be helped, at once.

"But that isn't enough," she said, and she pressed his hand for emphasis, "if you are not my ideal—There, I have hurt you!" she said, feeling him wince.

"No. Will you tell me what your ideal is? I would try to realize it."

"Well, you have said it. My ideal could never be realized by experimenting, and that is why I have always blamed you. Your aims have been too uncertain; you haven't known your own mind."

"I've known it on one point ever since I saw you, Parthenope."

"You mustn't be trivial. I thought you wanted me to reason with you."

"I do."

"Well"—she hesitated from a wandering thought—"then, a man," she said, "ought to have one aim and pursue it unswervingly. It mustn't be a selfish aim, and it must be a high one. He must want to be of use in the world, and yet he must have a love of the beautiful. He ought to be philanthropical, but not professionally philanthropical; that's rather weakening. I should not care what his calling was, and I shouldn't care what his looks were; he might be ugly and deformed and yet perfectly radiant. And—every woman likes to be thought worth an effort,—he ought to have done something specially great, and for her. There! I know it sounds ridiculous, but you are too noble to laugh at it, and that has always been my ideal. Of

course, I'm not worthy of it myself." She did not take her hand away at this climax, though she made a slight effort to do so. "I could die for such an ideal, and, whatever you think, that is how I feel."

"Then I think," he said, with a kind of indignation, "that you are far more than worthy. And may I do a little reasoning, too?"

"Yes," she said, with a slight push of her hand in his, as if to fix her attention, "I expected you to."

"Well, I would rather be an ideal which you would be willing to live for. I should like to be some faltering, imperfect creature that you could strengthen and straighten into the sort of man you would like him to be. I believe you would be happier in that than in dying for somebody who didn't need you. How could you be of use to a man who didn't need you? No, you are full of help, and uselessness would be solitude and exile to you, dearest. But with a man whom you could advise and inspire when he was going wrong, who would value your criticism and appreciate your taste, and come to know your sweetness and your brightness, to live in the light of your mind— Well, I suppose it is no use talking," he ended, and his hand relaxed from hers as if she might have it back now. But she would not have it back; she caught his faster, and she said:

"And you would be willing to try—"

"To experiment?"

"Yes, experiment! And if I disappointed you—if I wasn't at all what you expected—"

"I supposed we were reasoning!"

"And may I think—must I answer now—may I have time—"

"All the time there is, dear."

"I'm not sure you ought to call me dear—yet."

"I won't till you let me."

"I won't make you wait. I should despise myself if I didn't know now. And if you believe you'll never be sorry—"

"With all my soul!"

"Then—then you may call me Parthenope." She said, after a moment: "And I suppose I must call you Elihu. How came they to give you such a name?" She took refuge in the collateral question from the vital demands directly pressing upon her. "I've always wondered. Were they very Biblical?"

"Not very. They called me after Elihu Burritt."

"Oh, *that's* where the 'B' came from. And who was he?"

"He was the learned blacksmith. He was a famous linguist, and my father admired him because he taught himself the languages."

"Tell me about your father and your mother." She questioned him, and he answered at what length she would; they had long been dead; he had two brothers living; she thought she could manage with them; and he had no sisters. "And do you want me to call you Elyhu or Ellihu? Ellihu is wrong, isn't it?"

"Not if you call it so."

"I don't believe I like pretty speeches very much. But I don't object for the time being. Did *they* call you Ellihu? Because if they did, I shall. If *this*"—she pressed his hand for explanation—"is for eternity, it's for all our past as well as all our future. Ellihu, Ellihu, Ellihu," she murmured, thoughtfully. "It's nicer than Elyhu; yes, it's rather nice." She said, rather more shyly than her wont was, "You don't ask me how I came to know your first name."

"I hadn't thought— I supposed you always knew it."

"Isn't that a little conceited? And you haven't any curiosity now? You don't deserve to know! I saw it in a book of yours. Do you call that prying? But I couldn't imagine what the 'B' was for. How do you like my name?"

"I always thought it was like you. How came they to call you so?"

Parthenope told gladly but quickly, so as not to delay another branch of the inquiry. "It's rather formidable. But I shall never do anything in art; my mother didn't at the last. I want to be completely subordinate to you in everything. I shall have no ambition except for you. I suppose some people would say that naturally I was rather topping in my general character. But with you I don't care to be so because you've seen me humiliated so often. I sha'n't mind you laughing, now and then, at me."

"Oh!" he protested.

"Yes," she persisted. "With the bear and the gypsies; you know I've been ridiculous. Now I shall have no pride except in you."

"Do you want to spoil me at once?" he joked.

"It would be no use trying. You are too truly modest, too sweet."

"How do you know?"

"Because I'm not sweet, generally speaking. You'll find that out, too. But I shall be ashamed not to be, when I have you to rebuke me by your example. And from this time forth sweetness shall be one of my ideals. Oh yes, Aunt *Julia* will like you." She put stress on the name, as if there were some other aunt who might be doubtful.

Parthenope came in to where Mrs. Kelwyn was putting some of the last touches to her packing, with her

eyes blinking in the lamplight, but her face glowing with the impulse which had carried her to her decision and was still moving her to immediate action.

"Cousin Carry," she said, abruptly, "I shall only stay with you to get you settled in the stone cottage. I must see my aunt Julia at once."

"Why, Parthenope Brook!" Mrs. Kelwyn exclaimed, and in her exclamation she expressed, with a woman's subtilized and compacted challenge, everything that she did not demand.

"Yes, I *have*," Parthenope responded to her implied question. "And he is going to Boston with me, for I want Aunt Julia to have the evidence of her senses when I tell her what a wild thing I have done."

She went out, and then she came back to add: "I know that you and Cousin Elmer won't approve of it, and so I have not consulted you. It isn't because I have such great faith in my own judgment; it's because I trust *his* judgment. If *he* thinks it is right and wise! Don't you see?"

"Yes," Mrs. Kelwyn assented. But she qualified, "I see what your point of view is."

They had to pretend they would go no further now than the general recognition of the great fact. Then they talked it out to the least historical and actual detail.

XXVII

The trials of the Kelwyns had become noted in the country round, and they both woke with the same vague dread in their mind, which resolved itself into the apprehension that the neighbors might come to see them off in a show of public sympathy. But on reflection this fear yielded to the fact that it was not yet known much beyond the Shakers that they were going; it was commonly supposed that the Kites were going, and no time was fixed yet for that.

In the forenoon Elder Nathaniel came with a final bunch of flowers for Parthenope, and with affectionate messages from the Sisters to Mrs. Kelwyn. He said that Brother Jasper had gone to Boston, and he added, indirectly, that perhaps it was just as well. The Family, he said, hoped that the Kelwyns and all their folks would come the same as ever; they would not be a great way off.

Mrs. Ager came from over the way, and in making her first and last call she did not spare the cause of their exile. She said that they ought to have turned the Kites out, and, in view of the good offices which they must often have rendered her in her loneliness, she was, Kelwyn thought, perhaps too impartially severe, but he attributed her censorious frame of mind rather to her years than to a temperamental harshness. What touched them all more than Mrs. Ager's rigid virtue was the offering with which Mrs. Allson appeared, just before they sat down to luncheon,

which they had early. She led the youngest of her children that could walk, in a gingham slip typically washed and ironed, with a remoter following of her uncombed and barefooted brood. She carried her baby in her arms, and made shift to hold in a hand tight pressed against its back a book which she presented to Parthenope. "It's one," she explained, with a country confidence in her pronouns, "that his uncle give him, and he wants you should have it," and she held out a worn volume of Cooper, which Parthenope took, when she had made sure it was not merely a loan, with a gratitude which seemed to please, though it did not change the unsmiling face of the giver. "He ain't ever read it, and he'd just as lieves you'd have it as not," she said, in conclusion, leaving the remark to find its own place in the order of their conversation. "I told him about you makin' me come in that night."

"Oh, thank you, and thank Mr. Allson for me. I shall always keep the book to remember you by, both of you. I don't suppose I can come to see you soon again; I'm going back to Boston in a few days." Mrs. Allson had nothing to say in opposition to this, and she said nothing. "And I sha'n't forget what you said that night, Mrs. Allson; it was beautiful. Might I kiss the baby?" Parthenope asked, impulsively, and, after a moment's hesitation, she took the mother in her arms, too, and kissed her on either gaunt cheek. It was not quite in character with Parthenope, but it was not out of keeping with the mood toward all the world in which she found herself.

Mrs. Allson caught herself away, with a shrill screech to her children. "Come here this minute! You all want to get killed?"

Parthenope looked round and saw what Mrs. Allson

had already seen over her shoulder: the bear-leader and the bear advancing doubtfully toward them, with a choral attendance of the two Kelwyn boys and the Kite boy leaping into the air with cries of joy.

"Oh, papa! Oh, mamma!" Francy shouted to the upper windows. "It's the bear! It's the same bear! Mayn't he let him dance?"

Mrs. Kelwyn scolded them to silence from her window and bade them come in, but their father came down to the door, and then they stayed. Emerance appeared with Raney from the barn, where they had been mending the curtains of the carryall.

He was frowning as if in criticism of some suggestion that had tacitly offered itself, and he smiled rather absently when Kelwyn said: "This is getting to be something like the Vicar of Wakefield. But we need your gypsy van to complete the round-up of characters. Parthenope, where are your gypsies?"

For the first time the girl looked to a man for guidance in her reply. She looked to Emerance, who said: "I wish they were here. But I doubt whether their assortment of draft and led horses could stand the bear."

He still wore his critical frown, and Parthenope interpreted while she submitted: "Are you going to have the bear *in*?"

Emerance laughed, shamefacedly, "It would make an effective episode!"

"I knew it," she rejoiced, in a passage which left them in a secret together; but now she felt the necessity of using her novel powers of rule, which a girl who is engaged begins instinctively to use. "I wish you would go up into the dancing-room and get my sketching-block. I'll scratch them down if Raney will ask them to pose."

Emerance obeyed in a lover's glad servility, and she

sat down on the threshold-stone to get her picture, after Raney had made the bear-leader comprehend that he and his bear were wanted to stand for their portraits instead of performing their drama.

Mrs. Kite had left something to burn in her oven, while she looked over the artist's shoulder. "Well, the land!" she cried out, in wonder. A tell-tale odor stole from the kitchen, and she called, with a cheerful laugh, to Mrs. Kelwyn, "Well, I guess your cake will be done enough *this* time," which was her way of letting Mrs. Kelwyn know that she had meant to make her an offering for the refreshment of the Kelwyn family on the way to their new place.

Parthenope felt Emerance's eyes upon her. He thought they were on her work, but they were really on her; on her cinnamon hair; on the tilt of her head this way and that, up and down, as the practice of her art required; on the nape of her neck and her close-set little ears; on the droop of her shoulders, and on the play of her long, capable fingers. She felt the warmth of his gaze in all these places as he stood behind her, and she felt a bliss in it such as she had never imagined before. It was not at all the exaltation she had expected in her love for the hero of her dreams, and, in fact, Emerance was not that hero, though she found that she liked him better than if he had been. In derivation and education he was entirely middle-class, as far removed from what was plebeian as what was patrician. He had not come out of the new earth, which would have been heroic; he had sprung from soil wrought for generations, on the common level, which was average. He had been public-schooled for a public-school teacher, and, if he had something like an impulse of genius, it had been toward a calling which at the bottom of her heart she did not respect.

If chance had saved him from responding to this, it was by too bare a chance that he should now succeed as a playwright instead of a player. He had been willing to experiment with either career; he was, as he said, an empiricist; he was a mere opportunist, as she would have said later; and he had no decision of character. Yet he had charm, charm that she felt now in his mere presence, in his nearness to her. What his charm was she could not have said, unless it was his goodness. It must be that, for now, when she was so blest in him, she did not feel any more or any less than she felt at the very beginning that he was *good*. There was rest in that, there was peace. When at last she lifted her head back and looked at her sketch, she turned her face up to ask him, "Is it anything like?"

"It's wonderful," he said, stooping on one knee beside her and bringing his face close to hers to get her point of view. "I don't understand how you do it. Is it—is it—good?" he pursued, humbly.

"Good enough for me, if you think it's wonderful." She turned her eyes to his, and a mist came between them. "But otherwise I think it's rather feeble. You're not going to marry a Rosa Bonheur, you know." She laughed, and he laughed with her; they did not know why.

"We'll keep it as a memento of that first day," he suggested.

"Well," she assented, rising.

She felt in the pocket which women's dresses had in that day, and Emerance saw from her face that she found it empty. He divined also that she wished to pay the man, if not the bear, for posing, and he said, "Let me give him something."

She stared absently and then submitted. "I suppose you'll have to, after this. It isn't the first time."

The bear-leader took the money, and, after recognizing himself in Parthenope's sketch, he said good-bye, with ceremonies in which the bear was obliged to share. Then they went away down the road, and Raney started toward the barn. But Parthenope stayed him with a question which had occurred to her through her knowledge of French while she was sketching and trying not to be conscious of Emerance.

"What was that he kept saying to you about the brave boy?"

Raney grinned. "He want me to thank Arthur for bring him something to eat in that shanty in the woods when he'll be sick with his bear."

"When he was sick in the shanty?" she pursued.

"With rheumatism after that big storm."

"And Arthur carried food to him?" Raney nodded. "Well! But what kind of food did you carry him?"

Arthur had now become the centre of a general interest which did not inconvenience him, and he kept a stolid reserve under the pressure of this question.

Raney answered for him, still grinning, "The man said he bring those pies."

"Well, Mr. Arthur!" his mother, who had hurried back from the kitchen, burst out in the sudden light which the fact cast upon a dark point of history, "so *you* was the rat, was you? I'll attend to you when I get round to you once," she threatened him, but with such open pride and joy in his guilt as not to alarm him seriously. It was not his principle to show any kind of feeling, and he now remained cold amidst the rays of wonder centring upon him from all eyes.

"Emerance," Kelwyn said from that side of his mind which his wife never felt sure she approved, "we seem to be standing in the presence of a hero. What do you think ought to be done with him? It's

all very well for a hero to feed pies to a sick bear-leader and his bear—the bear ate the pies, too?" he turned to the boy who rubbed the path with his toe and dropped his gaze. "But is it right for a hero to steal his mother's pies for the purpose?"

"I suppose," Emerance reflected, "that it's always a question whether a child *can* steal, strictly speaking, from its parents; and I've understood that strategy of all kinds, even to the supression of truth, is allowable in a hero."

"But if such a hero were a pupil of yours, what would you do with him?"

"Well, I should begin by keeping him after school and looking carefully into the case."

"How perfectly cold-blooded!" Parthenope broke out. "I think he did right, and I should praise him before the whole school."

Emerance looked round at her with returning seriousness. "I doubt if you could do that exactly."

"So impossible is it," Kelwyn interposed, "for a woman to enter into any question of sociology."

"But if he were *your* son, Cousin Elmer?"

"Ah, there we have the personal appeal, the inevitable womanly, at once. Boys," he called to his children, "did you know that Arthur was taking his mother's pies and feeding them to the man and the bear?"

"Yes, papa," they answered, cheerfully, in their succession.

"And why didn't you tell us?" their mother put in; she had now joined the group before the house. "Didn't you know it was wrong for Arthur to take his mother's pies? Why didn't you tell your father?"

"He said the bear would eat us," the boys explained with full confidence in their justification.

"It seems to have been very simple," Kelwyn said to his wife. He turned again to his children. "Did Arthur say why he was taking the pies to the bear-man?"

"He said he was going to run away with the man when he got well?"

"Ah, that's simpler still," Kelwyn said, and when his children entreated him, "May we go and play with Arthur?" he answered, "Yes — provisionally — you may."

The case had passed beyond Mrs. Kelwyn's protests; but she found solace in the thought that they were playing with Arthur for the last time. Mrs. Kite went into the house with another promise to give it to her son, and Parthenope said to Kelwyn: "If you are joking, I am sure I'm not, and I approve of what Arthur did. He couldn't let the creatures starve. What do you think, Elder Nathaniel?" she turned to the Shaker, who had stood by, a silent witness.

"Nay, it is hard dealing with children; they must be judged according to their limited experience."

"Well, let us hope we shall be judged according to *our* limited experience, too," Kelwyn ended the inquiry.

Elder Nathaniel now took leave of the Kelwyns, so sadly and sweetly that they all felt a premature homesickness at their parting. "I am sorry," he said, "that you are not going to stay and help us put the Kites out of the house. We shall surely not let them remain," he ended, severely.

"Oh, you mustn't turn them out now," Kelwyn said. "At least, not for anything we've suffered. The few weeks we've been here do seem rather more like months, but it hasn't been all suffering, by any means. It's been, in some respects, highly educational; at least, it's been

instructive. I shall understand the sociology of the present, if not of the past, the better for my experience of the Kites. They seem a reversion to a type antedating Puritanism, which I couldn't imagine finding in New England."

"Yee, that is interesting," Elder Nathaniel assented, and they had some moments of philosophy, which Mrs. Kelwyn interrupted with hospitable insistances that the Elder should stay to dinner, and so drove him away.

Mrs. Ager came over again from her house with some little cakes she had baked for provisioning the boys on their journey to their new home, and she bestowed them on Mrs. Kelwyn with assurances, intentionally loud enough for Mrs. Kite to hear in her kitchen, that they were not made with rancid butter or milk not fit for the pigs. She wrought herself into such a generous rage that she forgot to say good-bye, and had to shout her farewell from her own door when she got home.

"Ain't she great?" Mrs. Kite asked, with humorous appreciation, as she came forward to the Kelwyns. "Well, I guess your dinner's ready for you, if *you* are. I'll bring it right in."

They had a gayer meal than they had enjoyed since Parthenope and Emerance had first sat down with them, and their pleasure in it was not blighted by the skill of Mrs. Kite. There was no perceptible change for the better, either in the material or its treatment; but it was offered with a good-will and a regret that went far to supplement the stores of their own provision; and something like affection for the unteachable amiability of the woman qualified their sense of her final impossibility.

The Kelwyns were naturally much distracted from their victual by the anomalous aspect of the situation

through the novel relation of Parthenope and Emerance to it. Having once firmly agreed with Parthenope that the relation was absolutely non-existent till it had been submitted to her aunt Julia and received her perfect, her even eager approval, Mrs. Kelwyn made such concession to it as to propose putting the young people together at the table. Parthenope rejected the notion, but when the boys had early excused themselves their father opened a small bottle of currant wine the Shaker sisters had given him, and proposed a toast significantly impersonal, "To the Future."

Before they left the table Benson's team appeared under their windows, and the two men had to go down and load it with the trunks and boxes which had already been gathered in the hallway below. They shared this labor with Raney and with Kite, who had stayed from his harvest in a conception of duty to his parting guests. Mrs. Kite cordially, almost tenderly, joined Mrs. Kelwyn and Parthenope in washing and packing the china and silver which belonged to the Kelwyns; she paused to say that she guessed she would not find anybody like them *very* soon.

When all was done, it appeared that Benson had not judged it necessary to stay and drive his wagon to the stone cottage, since Emerance, in all probability, could be trusted to do so, and to bring it back to him when it was unloaded. As it stood, finally, the wagon was so heaped with freight that the whole family could not hope to find transportation on it. It did not help that the Kelwyn boys were nowhere to be found. But when they had been looked for everywhere, they came running from the pasture, where they were seen afar in a distress that was not at first intelligible even when they came within hearing.

"He's dead, papa! He's dead, papa!" they called;

but, as they were visibly followed at a discreet interval by the Kite boy, it could not be his death which they were lamenting, and when Francy had been twitched into coherence by his mother he sobbed out, "We wanted to ride him to the new house, and now he's dead in the pasture and we can't ride him."

"We can't r-i-i-de him," Carl corroborated the report with tears.

"Who's dead? What's dead? What can't you ride?" their mother demanded.

"The horse!" they roared together. "The old, white one that Arthur give us."

"Well, stop crying," their father intervened, "and don't say 'give' us; I've told you before. Of course you can't ride him if he's dead and you want to go anywhere."

Arthur Kite arrived on the scene. "Guess he must 'a' died in the night," he explained, importantly.

"And what are we going to *do-o-o?*" the little Kelwyns wailed; and then, as from an inspiration, their eyes flashed hopefully through their tears. "Oh, may we ride on top of the trunks, papa?" Francy asked, and, "May we ride on the trunks, mamma?" Carl slightly varied him.

"I don't see how we're all going to ride on the trunks," Kelwyn remarked, after a critical glance at the load.

"Guess ye won't have to," Kite said, turning his back on Kelwyn for a better effect of politeness. "Raney's got the carryall hitched up, and he'll take ye over."

It was easy to be ungracious with Kite, and Kelwyn was aware of being so. "Very well; we shall have to accept your offer. What shall I pay you?"

"You don't want to pay me anything," Kite said,

moving away to his own door and leaving Kelwyn to settle with himself what he should pay Raney.

The question which pair should go with the baggage and which should go in the carryall was determined by Parthenope, who ordered Emerance to find safe perches for the Kelwyn boys, and then mounted on her own trunk, which had been put on in front, and, when all was ready, bade Emerance get up beside her. If she had come into her empire with misgiving, she ruled it with none; all the morning she had commanded him in the successive details; the shadow of old-maidhood which had once hovered near her had vanished in the radiant sense of her matronly power over the man whom she was treating already like a lifelong vassal, and who submitted gladly to her commands. There had been a moment when she questioned, in the warmth of her feelings, whether she should not kiss Mrs. Kite in taking leave; but finally she decided not, and shook hands with her as if she had been taking leave of a society hostess.

"Now you come over and see me," she charged the girl, who answered:

"I should like to, Mrs. Kite, but I'm going up to Boston on Saturday, and I don't believe there'll be time. But I sha'n't forget you, you may be sure."

The Kelwyns said much the same, except that they would stop some day when they were passing; and Mrs. Kite, on her part, offered to look them up. There was no leave-taking with Kite, but at the last moment there was a loud cry from the Kelwyn boys.

"We haven't said good-bye to Arthur!" Their belated remembrance of him did not visibly move their stoical comrade as he stood beside his mother.

"Well, *say* it, then," their father said, impatiently, and Parthenope suggested that Arthur should climb up

and say good-bye to them. But her plan did not satisfy the boys' ideal of friendship, and Emerance ended it by jumping from his place and lifting them down.

It appeared then that they wished to kiss Arthur, who took their embrace as if that kind of thing had never happened to him before, while his mother said, with amusement, "Well, the land!" Francy, with permission, gave him his knife for a keepsake, and Carl gave him a piece of lead-pencil. He, in his turn, gave them a small mud-turtle, which had survived captivity in the accumulations of his pocket; they were to share it between them as a souvenir, and feed it with earthworms if it could be got to eat them.

Emerance now put the boys, still calling their good-byes to their stolid comrade, into their places and took his own place beside Parthenope. Then, with a backward look at the Kelwyns, to see that she was not seen, she passed one hand through his arm and locked it into the other.

"Can you drive if I do that?" she asked.

"I will make the experiment," he answered, with his head bent low toward her.

"And are you happy?" she murmured, tenderly. "As happy as you expected to be?"

"Oh yes," he sighed. "If Professor Kelwyn had put those people out of the house I'm afraid he would have had a lifelong regret. But now, in going himself, in owning defeat at the hands of fate, he's won a victory that will always be a joy to him. I'm so glad for him."

"Yes," she said, in sinking a little from Emerance. But she pulled herself back with a sublime resolution never to let him know her disappointment. After all, was not it finer, his not thinking of themselves, or of their selfish happiness, at this supreme moment? Could

she stand so much impersonality through life, though? She decided that she could, and she said, bravely: "Oh, *do* go on, Ellihu," and at her bidding he chirruped to Benson's horses, which moved obediently, while she pushed still closer to him. "Well, now we've started in life together!"

Mrs. Kelwyn could not say quite the same of herself and her husband, but she felt as if she were almost beginning the world again, she was so richly content to be leaving her recent experience wholly behind her. She was therefore vexed the more with Kelwyn when he broke from a vague silence to say vaguely as if continuing aloud an inner strain of thinking:

"I suppose I might have been more patient, though whether with the patience of Job we could ever have brought them to our point of view, taught them anything? But oughtn't we to have tried harder?"

His wife knew what he meant. "You think I ought to have gone into the kitchen and labored with her? Mr. Emerance did that and you saw what it came to."

"Oh yes, you're right. But I wish I had a better conscience in it all. It doesn't seem my private debt that troubles me, but my private portion of the public debt which we all somehow owe to the incapable, the inadequate, the—the—shiftless."

"Oh, very well," Mrs. Kelwyn said, with the effect of renunciation which seldom failed to dismay Kelwyn. "If you are going to put that into your lectures you will lose all your influence."

He laughed sadly. "Then I won't do it. If I can't exert my influence without losing it I won't exert it." The notion pleased him, and now he laughed cheerfully.

THE END

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